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# AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION AND U.S. FOREIGN POLICY 1991

Edited by John E. Rielly

The Chicago Council on Foreign Relations

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# INTRODUCTION

*This Chicago Council on Foreign Relations report is based on a survey conducted by the Gallup Organization in October/November 1990, shortly before the end of President George Bush's second year in office. In order to verify public sentiment on the Persian Gulf crisis, we relied on additional Gallup polls taken in January both before and after the outbreak of the Persian Gulf war. We also made use of data from similar polls taken after the Soviet military intervention in Latvia and Lithuania in January 1991.*

## THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

Our Council survey was conducted one year after the opening of the Berlin Wall, when the year's foreign policy agenda had been dominated by revolutionary events in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. By the end of 1990, the political map of Europe, which had remained unchanged for over forty years, was unrecognizable. At least four former Soviet bloc nations installed freely elected governments and were on the way to developing market economies. The communist parties of Eastern Europe had been discredited, and the monopoly on power of the Soviet Communist Party had ended. A Germany that had been divided for more than 40 years achieved unity in just 11 short months. Both the United States and most European countries no longer looked upon the Soviet Union as an adversary but as a partner. With the August 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the Soviet Union and the United States found themselves working in parallel to resolve this major crisis. Both countries overwhelmingly supported the United Nations resolution condemning Iraq's action. The change in attitude toward the Soviet Union and toward the U.S.–Soviet military competition was the most important shift reflected in our survey, with ramifications in virtually all aspects of American foreign policy.

By the time our data were collected in mid-autumn, however, the encouraging trends of the previous year in the Soviet Union began to sour. The Soviet empire was in ruins, the leaders of the Soviet Union struggled to keep their country intact amid mounting nationalist and separatist pressures from the many republics. By the time President Gorbachev received the Nobel Peace Prize in late 1990 for his efforts to reform the Soviet Union and end the Cold War, store shelves were empty. As the new year opened in 1991, the country regarded as a superpower for four decades was accepting foreign aid to help feed its population. By mid-January 1991, President Gorbachev appeared to many to be reversing his policy of openness and placing his program of economic and social restructuring on the back burner. When Soviet troops moved into Lithuania and Latvia in January, many wondered whether the government's action was a temporary phenomenon or part of a long-range policy reversal.

The results of this survey were also colored by the seizure of Kuwait by Iraq's President Saddam Hussein, causing a sudden shift in much of the foreign policy agenda from Europe to the Persian Gulf. At the time this report went to press, it seemed likely that the United States-led coalition would succeed in driving Iraq out of Kuwait even if the length of the war remained uncertain. What is much less clear is the pattern of a post-war settlement that may develop. Equally unclear is what kind of American role is envisioned in the Persian Gulf over a period of decades, and whether the American public and leaders are prepared to support a long-term military presence in that part of the world.

## THE MOOD IN THE UNITED STATES

In the four years since the last study was published, we have witnessed a period of general economic prosperity in most of the OECD countries, including the United States. Although it is now widely acknowledged that the United States is in a recession, that was not so evident in mid-autumn of 1990. The preoccupation with certain economic issues like inflation and unemployment that was evident in some earlier studies was not consistently reflected here.

Despite an extended economic expansion throughout most of the decade of the 1980s, the United States had become the world's largest debtor nation by the beginning of the new decade. It was increasingly reliant on external sources to finance its growing debt, which by autumn 1990 had approached $3.4 trillion. The United States' budget deficit reached $150–200 billion, increasing further in early 1991 with the cost of war in Iraq. The trade deficit had declined somewhat, but was still running at well over $100 billion a year. The combination of massive deregulation and limited enforcement with continued government insurance produced a savings and loan crisis that would eventually cause the collapse of hundreds of institutions and cost the American public an estimated $200–500 billion. American commercial banks were also severely weakened. By the beginning of 1991, a number had failed and others were increasingly fragile. Thus, by the time the end of the Cold War was generally being accepted, the United States found itself in an increasingly shaky economic position.

## THE SURVEY

This is the fifth public opinion survey and analysis sponsored by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations. The key question in all of the Chicago Council surveys remains the extent to which the American public and leaders continue to support an active role for the United States overseas. The report again addresses such issues as the relationship between domestic and foreign policy priorities, the response to far-reaching

changes in Europe and the Soviet Union, the shift in foreign policy priorities and the shift in attention from some areas of the world to others.

The principal data on which the survey is based were collected 16 years after the first survey, which was carried out in the autumn of 1974. The second survey was conducted in 1978, the third in 1982, and the fourth in 1986. The results of those surveys were summarized and published in 1975, 1979, 1983, and 1987 in reports entitled *American Public Opinion and U.S. Foreign Policy*.

The Chicago Council on Foreign Relations commissioned the Gallup Organization to conduct this survey, including separate but similar questionnaires for both the general public and national leaders. The survey of the American public involved a stratified, systematic, random, national sample of a total of 1,662 American men and women 18 years of age and older. The questions were weighted to eliminate sampling distortion with respect to age, sex, or race. The field work for that part of the study was conducted between October 23 and November 15, 1990. All of these were personal interviews.

The leadership sample involved 377 individuals interviewed either in person or by telephone between October 19 and November 16, 1990. The leadership sample included Americans in senior positions with knowledge of international affairs. We included roughly equal proportions from the national political and governmental world, including both Houses of Congress (members of the Foreign Relations, Foreign Affairs, and Armed Services Committees) and officials with international responsibilities in the State, Treasury, Defense, and other related federal departments. Participants were also drawn from the business community (chairmen and international vice presidents of large corporations as well as leaders of business associations), the communications field (editors and publishers of major newspapers, wire service executives, television broadcasters), education (presidents and scholars from major colleges and universities), and leaders from private foreign policy institutes. A smaller number of leaders was also drawn from national labor unions, churches, volunteer organizations, and various ethnic organizations.

As noted above, the data collected by our comprehensive survey were also supplemented by selected Gallup polls of the public conducted in January 1991.

Interviewing, collating, and tabulating was done through the facilities of the Gallup Organization, Incorporated. The design and contents of the questionnaire were prepared after consultation with the Gallup Organization by the editor and the following consultants: Bernard Cohen, Professor Emeritus of Political Science at the University of Wisconsin/Madison; Arthur Cyr, Vice President and Program Director of the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations; Benjamin Page, Gordon Scott Fulcher Professor of Decision Making at Northwestern University; William Schneider, Resident Fellow of the American Enterprise Institute; Donald Jordan, Ph.D. Candidate in Political Science at Northwestern University; and Catherine Hug, Program Officer and Publications Editor at the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations.

The figures from the completed survey were organized and compiled by the Gallup Organization. The analysis and interpretation of data presented in this report represent the joint efforts of the above group working with the editor. We have published the analysis of the data as quickly as possible after the field work was completed. The response to our earlier reports confirms our judgment that the advantages of a brief but timely summary analysis outweigh the disadvantages of doing a comprehensive study in so short a period of time. The report should be considered in that light. The data derived from this survey will be placed on deposit with the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor and the Roper Center for Public Opinion in Storrs, Connecticut. It will be available to scholars and other interested professionals. The margin of error is plus or minus three percentage points for the public sample and plus or minus five percentage points for the leadership sample.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I want to take this opportunity to express my thanks and appreciation to my principal collaborators: Bernard Cohen, Arthur Cyr, Benjamin Page, William Schneider, and Donald Jordan. I would like to extend a special word of thanks to Catherine Hug, Publications Editor at the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations. She lent her critical judgement to the substance of the report and was responsible for all aspects of the publication. Special thanks are also due to Sally Stegeman, Frances Waddock and Gina Grillo, who assisted in the production and dissemination of the report, and to Maureen O'Connor, Lorri Andronis, and Janice Simpson, who displayed skill and persistence in processing the various drafts of the manuscript. I also want to thank the Gallup Organization for their cooperation while working under a tight schedule, especially Richard Burkholder, Jr. and Christine Gelhaus.

On behalf of the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, I want to express our gratitude to the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and to the Ford Foundation for providing the principal financing for the project. I also want to extend our thanks to the Information Office of the Commission of the European Communities in Washington, D.C. for their additional assistance.

John E. Rielly
President
The Chicago Council on Foreign Relations
February 11, 1991

# THE FINDINGS IN SUMMARY

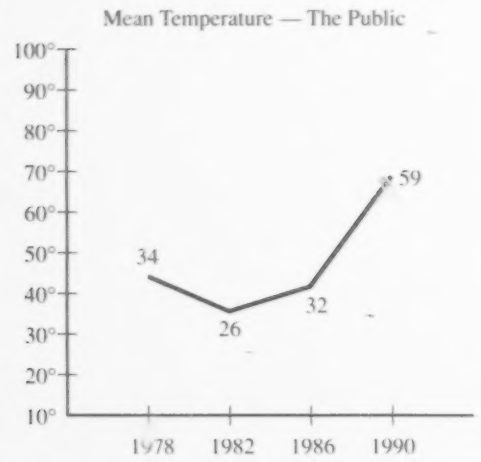
*The mood of the American public and leaders has shifted. The Cold War and the U.S.-Soviet competition are passing from center stage, and a new age of global economic competition has emerged. Americans enter this new era with increased confidence about their military preeminence, but with a growing sense of economic vulnerability.*

### THE SOVIET UNION

This is the fifth Chicago Council study of American foreign policy attitudes and the first not dominated by Cold War issues. Only one-third of the public and one-fifth of the leaders now consider the military power of the Soviet Union a "critical threat" to the United States in the next ten years. The leaders perceive the United States as vastly superior in military power to the Soviet Union, although the public views the balance as more equal. There are indications that the public is more cautious and skeptical than the leaders about the Soviet Union, but overall opinion about the Soviet Union has improved dramatically. Both leaders and the public support a wide array of cooperative measures with the Soviet Union. Rather than as the principal adversary, Americans now view the Soviet Union as one of the three leading countries in which the United States has a vital interest. The public ranks the Soviet Union fourth in favorability on our "feeling thermometer" of countries, and Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev was ranked one of the four most highly esteemed world leaders, roughly even with President George Bush.

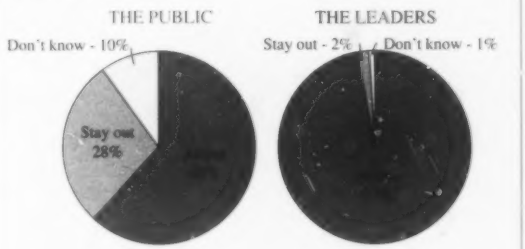
It remains unclear, however, how firm this change in attitudes will prove to be. By late January 1991, Soviet military intervention in the Baltic republics threatened to cool American attitudes toward the Gorbachev government, although the latest Gallup poll in late January indicates that so far this action has not affected the overall positive American view of President Gorbachev we documented in our survey.

**SOVIET UNION THERMOMETER RATING**




**PREFERRED U.S. ROLE IN WORLD**

*"Do you think it will be best for the future of the country if we take an active part in world affairs or if we stay out of world affairs?"*




### U.S. ROLE IN WORLD AFFAIRS

Despite the virtual disappearance of concern over a worldwide "communist threat," Americans remain committed to the active role in world affairs they supported in the 1980s. The nature of the commitment has changed. Fighting ideological battles with communist states has decreased in priority. Protecting American economic interests and maintaining a global military, economic and political position continues as a high priority. Both the public and leaders now believe that because of its inability to solve economic problems, the United States has declined as a world power. This growing sense of economic vulnerability has shaken the confidence in the United States' ability to maintain a global leadership role even though such a role is desired.

### VITAL INTERESTS

The public perceives the most vital interests to the United States in Saudi Arabia, the Soviet Union, Japan and Great Britain (tied), Kuwait and Canada (tied) and Germany, in that order. The leaders put both Japan and Germany at the top, followed by Mexico, the Soviet Union, Canada, Saudi Arabia and Great Britain.

## ECONOMIC ISSUES

America's economic problems are rooted partly in perceived failings at home and are viewed as the biggest overall problems facing the country today. The federal budget deficit and dissatisfaction with the performance of government were among the top three national problems listed by both the public and leaders. At the same time, increasing global economic competition has led the public to perceive a greater correlation than in the past between American foreign policy and the state of the U.S. economy. Both the public and leaders are strongly convinced of the impact of U.S. foreign policy on our overall economy, including gasoline prices and the value of the dollar abroad. The public, more than the leaders, tends to believe that foreign policy also affects unemployment and food prices at home.

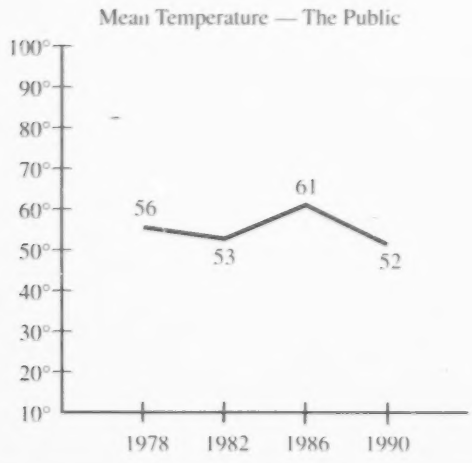
The public's highest preferred goals for U.S. foreign policy are economic: "protecting the jobs of American workers" and "protecting the interests of American business abroad." Although the leaders profess the more globalist goals of "preventing the spread of nuclear weapons," "worldwide arms control" and "improving the global environment" as most important, "reducing our trade deficit with other countries" still ranks near the top of preferred foreign policy goals for the United States.

Increased concern about America's competitive economic position has not, however, affected any significant change in attitudes about free trade. The traditional division between the public and leaders remains consistent with past surveys: nearly two-thirds of the leaders favor eliminating tariffs, while just over half of the public think some trade restrictions are necessary.

## JAPAN

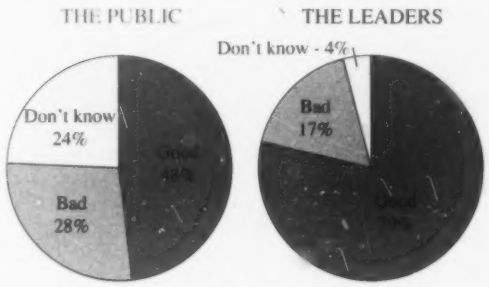
Increased global economic competition has affected attitudes toward Japan, viewed as the main source of trade conflict and unfairness. Despite status as a vitally important ally of the U.S., Japan ranked relatively low on our "feeling thermometer" of countries, dropping in standing from 1986. By substantial margins, both the public and leaders believe the economic power of Japan will be a more critical threat to American vital interests in the next few years than will Soviet military power. Strong majorities view Japan as an unfair trading partner. Less than half of the public would favor the use of troops to defend Japan against an attack by the Soviet Union. Although the leaders believe Japan should help pay for the war with Iraq because of its heavy reliance on oil from the region, both the public and leadership express strong opposition to Japan playing a larger military role in the world. Concern about Japan was also reflected in the overall low marks given to the Bush Administration on its handling of relations between our two countries. A majority of both the public and the leaders rated the record as "fair" or "poor."

### JAPAN THERMOMETER RATING




### EUROPEAN UNIFICATION

*"Do you think the economic unification of Western Europe will be mostly a good thing or mostly a bad thing for the United States?"*




## EUROPE

European countries continue to rank among the top countries in terms of both "vital interests" and favorability on the "feeling thermometer." Americans' commitment to NATO, the intensely close security alliance enjoyed with European countries over the past 40 years, remains strong, but is shifting, most dramatically among the leaders, in favor of cutting back the number of troops stationed there. The economic integration of the European Community planned for 1992 is viewed in a highly positive light. Large proportions of both the public and leaders believe that 1992 will be "mostly a good thing" for the United States. A decided majority of the leaders believe that the Europeans practice fair trade, although the public is more skeptical. Concern about economic competition from Western Europe has grown. A plurality of the public believes the EC practices unfair trade, although the reactions are considerably less severe than those concerning Japan.

The rise of economic competition from Europe and Japan may be partially reflected in support for a North American trading region. A majority of both the leaders and public favor a free trade agreement with Mexico, just as the U.S. now has with Canada.

## ATTENTIVENESS TO FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Along with an overall preoccupation with economic problems, Americans are now more attuned than ever to global events. The proportion of people "very interested" in news about U.S. relations with other countries has now virtually

caught up with the proportion of those interested in local and national news, which traditionally occupied much more public attention.

### THE MIDDLE EAST

After a decade of relative obscurity, the Middle East, not surprisingly, occupies Americans' greatest attention, representing the biggest foreign policy problem now facing the United States for both the leaders and the public. Iraq is viewed as one of the principal threats to America's vital interests. Willingness to use U.S. troops to defend Saudi Arabia, however, was markedly higher than willingness to use force to drive Iraqi forces out of Kuwait at the time of our survey.

The crisis in the Middle East also affected a change in the priority of other issues. Oil dependency was among the biggest foreign policy problems listed by the public, although it ranked lower among the leaders. When asked how to tackle the problem, both the public and the leaders most favored "developing alternative energy sources" and "requiring cars to get better gas mileage." The public was most opposed to "imposing an additional 25-cents-per-gallon tax on gasoline" while the leaders did not favor "imposing a limit on the amount of oil that can be imported."

Another interesting result was the relative increase in support for protecting weaker nations against foreign aggression and protecting and defending human rights in other countries as important foreign policy objectives. These were undoubtedly a response to Saddam Hussein's aggression in the Middle East and the strong world response to his invasion of Kuwait.

Attitudes toward Israel and its relationship with the U.S. continue to evolve. Both the leadership and public attitudes toward Israel are more critical than they were four years ago. Yet, willingness to use American troops in Israel's defense is greater.

### DEFENSE AND SECURITY

Support for U.S. defense spending has represented one of the most important opinion variations over time. The 1990 survey revealed that public and leadership attitudes have moved markedly away from support for greater defense spending.

Partisanship plays a significant role in defense attitudes. Republicans remain much more committed to defense spending than Democrats, although Republicans are expressing more readiness to cut defense spending given the decline of Soviet military power.

Overall, the public remains more reluctant than leaders to use troops in crisis situations overseas, but are arguably less discriminating than the leaders on where they would most or least favor their use. As in the past, Americans are most willing to use our forces to defend Western Europe against a Soviet invasion and Saudi Arabia against an Iraqi invasion. They are least willing to use troops to defend El Salvador and the Philippines in the event of a revolution or civil unrest in those countries.

Support for NATO in general remains strong, but is shifting. A total of 56% of the public wants to keep the commitment at the same level, yet the leaders favor a reduction, and both groups would like to reduce the total number of troops in Europe to a level well below the current 300,000.

### CIA AND CONGRESS

There was a noticeable reduction, especially on the part of the leaders, in willingness to have the CIA employ covert actions to undermine unfriendly foreign governments. Concerning the domestic balance of power between Congress and the Administration, the results were comparable to those of our previous survey: pluralities of both public and leaders believe the role of Congress compared to that of the President is "about right" in determining foreign policy. There has been a slight increase among proportions of the public believing Congress is too strong and of the leaders who believe that branch of government is too weak.

### GAPS BETWEEN THE LEADERS AND PUBLIC

Once again, large gaps divide the public from leaders on a number of issues. Leaders are more convinced that the Cold War is over, are more critical of Israel, and more concerned about the growing power of Japan. Leaders favor sharper cuts in American troop strength in Europe and in the defense budget. Leaders are overwhelming in favor of economic aid to other countries, while the public is evenly split on the issue. The most favored recipients of such aid are also changing. The public is most willing to send aid to South American countries combatting the drug problem, while leaders most favor increasing aid to the newly independent countries of Eastern Europe. At the same time, leaders would prefer that the European Community take the lead in providing assistance to its eastern neighbors.

While the Bush Administration's overall public rating on foreign policy is lower than that of the Reagan Administration four years ago, leaders react more favorably to Bush's foreign policy than they did to Reagan's.

# CHAPTER ONE
# THE PRIORITY OF FOREIGN POLICY

*We begin this analysis of public opinion and foreign policy, as we have in past years, by inquiring into the importance of foreign policy issues for Americans today—for the public and also for their leaders. How high a priority is attached to foreign affairs compared with domestic policy issues? How closely do people follow these different kinds of issues? Many years ago Walter Lippmann talked about the maps in people's heads. What is the current "map" of public affairs, and how and where does foreign policy fit into it? After a year of enormous political convulsion in both domestic and international politics across the globe, where now is the international horizon for Americans?*

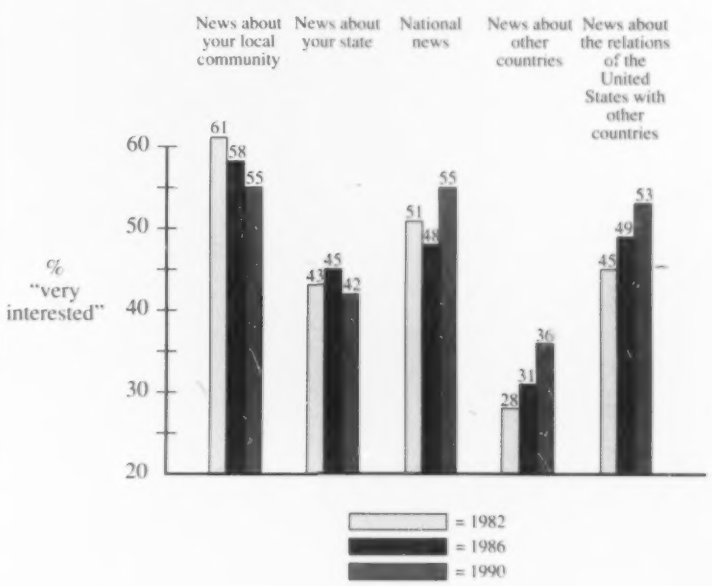
## ATTENTIVENESS TO FOREIGN AFFAIRS

The public's attentiveness to the world is shown most strikingly in the growing number of Americans who are "very interested" in news about other countries and in news about U.S. relations with them. Both of these figures have increased steadily since 1978 (see Figure I–1) and are now at the highest levels since the Chicago Council surveys began. Accompanying the trend is a drop in interest in local and state news. The proportion of those who are "very interested" in news about U.S. relations with other countries is now virtually the same as the proportion of those "very interested" in local and national news. The dramatic news from Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union and the Middle East during the year prior to and during the survey questioning is no doubt reflected in these findings, but the trend over a decade clearly indicates a growing base of international interest and awareness among Americans.

The higher levels of general interest in news of an international or foreign policy character coincide with the levels of interest expressed in news about specific events. Thirty-four percent of the general public follow news about changes taking place in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe "very closely," and an additional 41% follow such news "somewhat closely." Fifty-one percent of the public follow events in the Middle East "very closely," with an additional 33% following them "somewhat closely." Events in China and in South Africa, however, are not followed as closely as the internationally more portentous events in Eastern Europe and the Middle East.

To facilitate our analysis of *American Public Opinion and U.S. Foreign Policy*, we constructed an index of attentiveness to foreign affairs using data from questions on people's interest in news about other countries and U.S. relations with other countries, and data from questions on how closely people followed news about five events: changes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, events in the Middle East, events in China, events in South Africa, and elections in South America. Those who scored in the top 40% on the additive scale of attentiveness we call the "high attentives," and those who scored in the bottom 40% we call the "low attentives." In 1990, 29% of the sample were "high attentives" and 39% were "low attentives."

**FIGURE I–1. ATTENTIVENESS TO THE NEWS — THE PUBLIC**

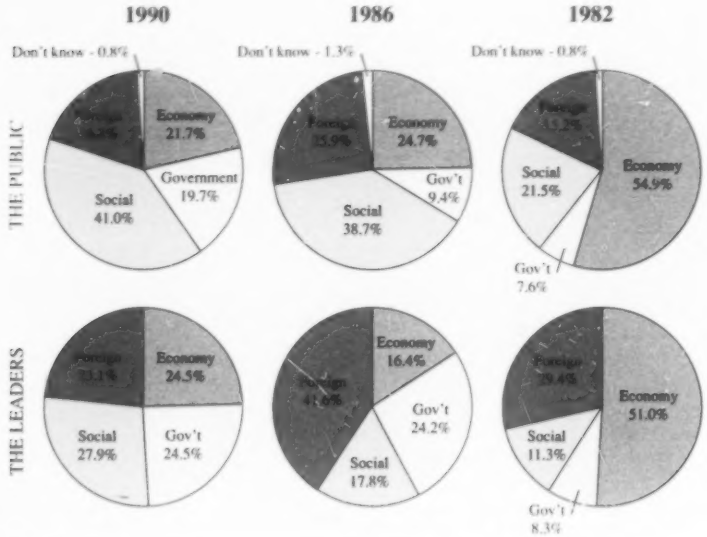



## FOREIGN POLICY AND THE NATIONAL AGENDA

The national agenda refers to the issues that are foremost in people's minds when they are asked about the "two or three biggest problems facing the country today." Interestingly enough, despite the increased attention to international news,

## FIGURE I–2. NATIONAL PROBLEMS

*"What do you feel are the two or three biggest problems facing the country today?" Responses are grouped into four categories: economy, government, social problems and policy, and foreign policy.*




concern about foreign policy problems has declined sharply.

Figure I–2, which charts a breakdown of the biggest overall problems facing the country given by respondents in our last three surveys, shows that the foreign policy concerns of the general public are nearly back down to the level of 1982, while those of the leadership sample are at the lowest level in the Chicago Council's series. The foreign policy problems cited by the general public are only 17% of the total problems they identify, down from 26% in 1986. For the leadership sample, foreign policy problems have dropped even more substantially, from 42% of the total in 1986 to just 23% today. For the general public, foreign policy problems are, in fact, cited less often than any other group of issues. What is especially unusual about the results is not only that they were given in the midst of the threat of war in the Middle East, but also that—unlike the situation in 1978 and 1982—the public's attention has not been pulled away from foreign policy by pressing domestic economic issues.

The obvious explanation for this development is that the perceived decline in Soviet power and the commensurate waning of the Soviet "threat" have simply allowed Americans to focus on a broader range of political, economic and social issues. The decline in concern over U.S.–Soviet competition, including issues of nuclear war, arms control, and national defense, while not unexpected, is one of the most remarkable developments documented in the entire series of Chicago Council surveys.

The responses listed in Figure I–3 show the diversity of problems about which people are concerned as well as the absence of such "blockbuster" issues of prior years as inflation in 1978 (with 67% of the public and 85% of the leaders identifying it as one of the biggest problems) or unemployment in 1982. The two biggest problems for the public at the time of our survey, drug abuse and the federal budget deficit, were still only identified by 30% of the respondents. For the leadership sample, although the budget deficit (46%) topped the list of national problems, concern about the deficit actually decreased from 1986 by 11 points, whereas the increase among the public was 18 points.

### FOREIGN POLICY AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

Another way in which we have measured the relative importance of foreign policy to our respondents is to compare the government programs that they would like to see expanded with those they would like to see cut back. As in past reports, an index of support for each program was calculated by subtracting the percentage of those who wanted to cut it back from the percentage of those who wanted to see it expanded. Results from the last four surveys are shown in Figure I–4, where positive indices show public support for expansion of programs and negative indices show net public desire to cut them back.

Figure I–4 shows the continued priority accorded by the public to domestic over foreign policy programs. All three foreign policy programs have negative indices, as does the space program. The four domestic programs all have positive indices. There can be little doubt that the American people as a whole would rather see their government invest in social programs before investing in anything associated with foreign countries. The sharp decline in support for the space program suggests that it is viewed in association with the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) and the arms race with the Soviet Union rather than with the general exploration of space.

A glance at Figure I–4 also shows us that both economic and military aid have received the least support from the public over the sixteen-year period of these surveys. They are now at the lowest levels we have yet recorded. On the other hand, aid to education, social security, and programs to fight illegal drugs continue to enjoy substantial public favor. Aid to education is at an all-time high and "drug-war" programs, new to the list, are at almost the same high level.

Net support levels for federal programs in 1990 among the leadership sample differ in interesting ways from the figures for the general public, although the overall thrust is not vastly different. Defense (-75) and military aid (-73) show strongly negatives indices, and all social programs except social security show positive indices—(education at +73, welfare and relief at +30, and anti-drug programs at +42). Social security, however, along with the space program, is slightly negative (-8 and -9, respectively). Economic aid, in sharp contrast to the

## FIGURE I–3. NATIONAL PROBLEMS

*"What do you feel are the two or three biggest problems facing the country today?" * Percentages reflect the number of people whose responses were among the top three answers given.*

| THE PUBLIC | | THE LEADERS | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 30% | **Budget deficit** (failure to balance budget, national debt, excessive government spending) | 46% | **Budget deficit** (failure to balance budget, national debt, excessive government spending) |
| 30% | **Drug abuse** | 36% | **The economy** (in general) |
| 18% | **Dissatisfaction with government** (unqualified politicians, corruption in government, lack of leadership) | 20% | **Dissatisfaction with government** (unqualified politicians, corruption in government, lack of leadership) |
| 16% | **The economy** (in general) | 19% | **Iraq** (Saddam Hussein/invasion of Kuwait) |
| 15% | **Crime** | 17% | **Education** (improving schools) |
| 13% | **Poverty** (hunger, homelessness) | 17% | **The Middle East** (in general) |
| 11% | **The Middle East** (in general) | 11% | **Drug abuse** |
| 10% | **Taxes** | 11% | **Industrial competitiveness** |
| 10% | **Unemployment** (low wages, recession) | 8% | **Environment** |
| 8% | **Oil crisis** (cost of oil, energy crisis) | 7% | **Unemployment** (low wages, recession) |

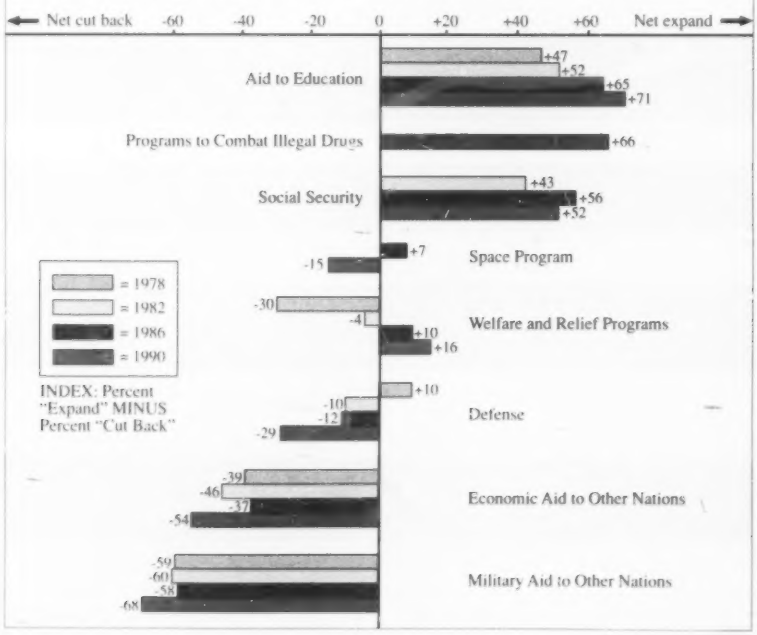
*There has been a very slight change in the wording of this question since 1978, when we asked respondents to name "the two or three biggest problems facing the country today that you would like to see the federal government do something about." Because the role of the federal government in the solution of national problems itself became perceived as a political problem since the 1980 elections, we decided that comparability with prior surveys would be enhanced if we dropped the qualifying phrase "that you would like to see the federal government do something about."

public evaluation, is moderately well supported (+22).

In summary, while the American public is demonstrating comparatively greater interest in international developments, highest priority in terms of practical policy concerns still lies at home.

## FIGURE I–4. SPENDING ON FEDERAL PROGRAMS — THE PUBLIC

*"I am going to read a list of present federal government programs. For each, I'd like you to tell me whether you feel it should be expanded, cut back, or kept about the same."*



# CHAPTER TWO
# THE GOALS OF FOREIGN POLICY

*American foreign policy officially began with the appointment of Benjamin Franklin as chairman of the "Committee on Secret Correspondence" during the Continental Congress of 1775. Thomas Jefferson became the first Secretary of State under the U.S. Constitution in 1789, with a staff of eight. Since that time, America's emergence as a strong economic and military power in the world saw the growth of its foreign policy into a large, complex and important dimension of the American agenda. How do today's Americans view the U.S. role in the world? What policies should the U.S. pursue around the globe, and how are we faring on their implementation? These questions are the focus of our analysis in this chapter.*

### PREFERRED U.S. ROLE IN WORLD

The end of the Cold War might be expected to produce a burst of confidence in the American public: "We won." The Soviet threat has diminished. The United States is the only real military superpower in the world.

On the other hand, the perception of American economic decline might be expected to have precisely the opposite effect: "We are losing." The Japanese challenge is increasing. The United States is being outpaced economically by Japan and faces stiffer competition from a united Europe.

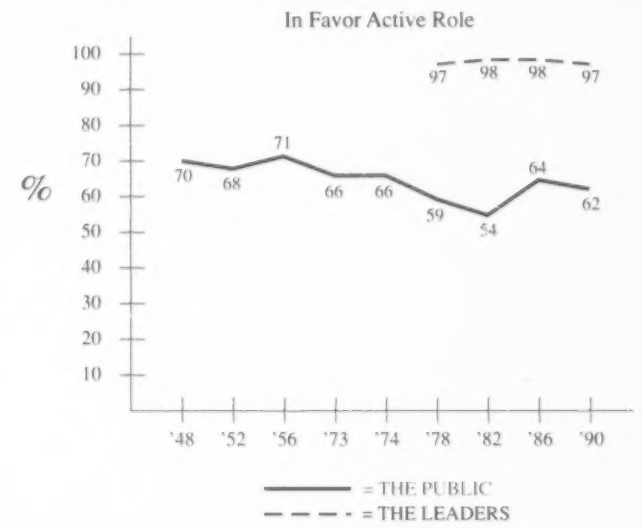
How have these two contradictory forces affected Americans' commitment to active world involvement? Not at all, according to the results of our survey (see Figure II–1). By better than 2-to-1, Americans say it would be best for the future of the country if we take an active part in world affairs rather than stay out of them. At 62%, the proportion of Americans who say we should take an active part in world affairs is nearly the same as in 1986, when we noted "signs of a reaffirmation of active interest in foreign policy" after a decade of declining interest during the 1970s. The numbers at that time had declined from the high 70% range of the 1940s and 1950s to a low of 54% in 1982. In 1986 the number jumped 10 points to 64%, about where it remains today.

It should be noted that, as in the past, national leaders are virtually unanimous in their support for an active world role: 97% support such a role, almost unchanged from the 97–98% figures recorded in all our surveys since 1978.

Internationalist thinking has long been a function of education. College graduates are the most supportive of an active U.S. role in the world (79%). High school dropouts are the least supportive at 41.5%, with about the same proportion, 45%, holding the opinion that the U.S. should stay out of world affairs. No other group among those polled, including non-whites, women, Democrats, Republicans or young people, are on balance isolationist.

Hence, there is no evidence that having "won" the Cold War and facing serious economic problems at home, Americans are ready to withdraw from the world. But neither is there a noticeable increase in commitment to international involvement. The confidence-building and confidence-diminishing events of the past four years appear to have canceled each other out.

**FIGURE II–1. PREFERRED U.S. ROLE IN WORLD**




### ACTUAL U.S. ROLE IN WORLD

Americans clearly want to continue playing an active role in world affairs. But how do respondents assess our role as a world leader now as compared to 10 years ago? On this question opinion is closely divided. Thirty-seven percent of the public believe the U.S. plays a more important role as a world leader now than

10 years ago; 35% say we play a less important role; and 24% say our role is about the same (see Figure II–2). Those figures represent a noticeable increase since 1986 in the percentage of Americans who say the country plays a less important role in the world—from 26% to 35%. In the early post-Vietnam period, 1978–82, the balance of public sentiment was that the U.S. played a less important role in the world. By 1986, that sentiment had shifted quite sharply. The Reagan Administration's military buildup and international assertiveness produced a sense of stronger U.S. world leadership. Now, the public has retreated to an even balance, very likely reflecting the mixed impact of declining economic and increasing military power.

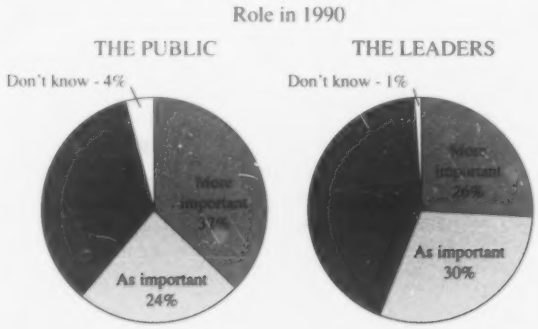
The same trend shows among the leaders. In 1978 and 1982, a majority believed the U.S. was playing a less powerful world leadership role. By 1986, that figure had dropped sharply. Leaders expressed a sense of resurgent U.S. power, though not as sharply as did the public. At the time of our survey, the prevailing view among the leaders was that the U.S. is playing a less important role as a world leader. Over the years, it should be noted, the public has always been more likely than leaders to see the U.S. as a powerful world leader. The sense of relative American decline appears to be stronger among American leaders than among the American people. The Gulf War, under American leadership, has no doubt sharply boosted the proportion who would say that we are now playing a more important role.

## FOREIGN POLICY PROBLEMS

This marks the first Chicago Council survey in which Cold War problems have not dominated the public's foreign policy concerns. When asked to name the two or three biggest foreign policy problems facing the country, the Middle East situation and Iraq, not surprisingly, are at the top of the list for the general public, at 21% and 18% respectively (see Figure II–3). Oil problems, at 14%, are not far behind. All grew sharply in salience since 1986. The foreign policy problems that diminished in importance from the 1986 survey were arms control, dropping 14 percentage points to only 2%, and relations with the Soviet Union, dropping 19 points to only 3% (see Figure II–4). Concern about problems in Latin America fell from 10% to 2%, and concern about South Africa fell

### FIGURE II–2. ACTUAL U.S. ROLE IN WORLD

*"Do you think the United States plays a more important and powerful role as a world leader today compared to ten years ago, a less important role, or about as important a role as a world leader as it did ten years ago?"*

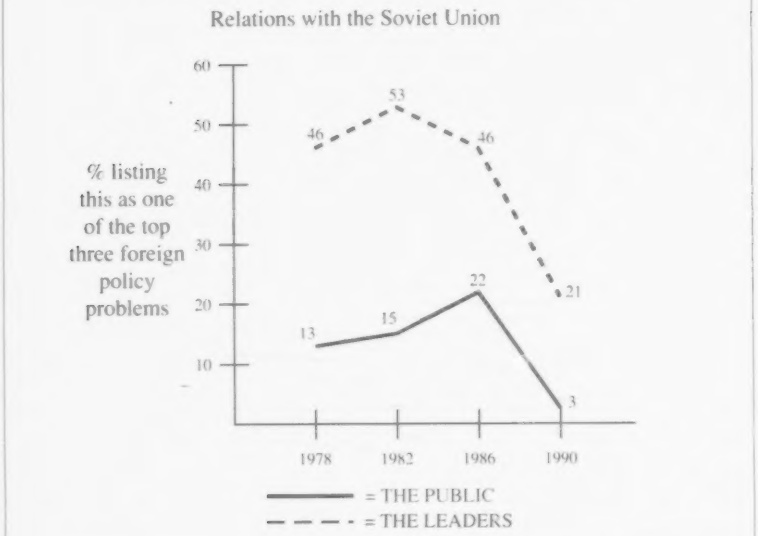



### FIGURE II–3. FOREIGN POLICY PROBLEMS

*"What do you feel are the two or three biggest foreign policy problems facing the United States today?" The answers listed are spontaneous responses.*

| THE PUBLIC | | THE LEADERS | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 21% | **Middle-East situation** (unspecified) | 44% | **Iraq** (Saddam Hussein, invasion of Kuwait) |
| 18% | **Iraq** (Saddam Hussein, invasion of Kuwait) | 29% | **Middle-East situation** (unspecified) |
| 18% | **Foreign aid** (too much sent to other countries) | 21% | **Relations with the Soviet Union** |
| 14% | **Balance of payments** (trade deficit, too much money going out of country, import of foreign products) | 18% | **International trade** (free trade with all countries, some countries too strict with trade policies) |
| 14% | **Oil problems** (dependency on oil-producing countries, need to develop energy sources) | 14% | **World economy** |
| 8% | **War** (threat of war, fear of nuclear war) | 13% | **Keeping peace** (should have better relations with other countries) |
| 6% | **Staying out of affairs of other countries** | 12% | **Impact of freedom in Eastern Europe** |
| 5% | **Keeping peace** (should have better relations with other countries) | 9% | **Relations with Japan** |
| 5% | **International trade** (free trade with all countries, some countries too strict with trade policies) | 8% | **Third World problems** (poverty, underdevelopment, indebtedness) |

**FIGURE II–4. FOREIGN POLICY PROBLEMS**




slightly from 4% to 1%. Concern over our relationship with Japan and Israel increased in both cases from 1% to 4%.

There is evidence of growing economic concerns in the response to this question. As noted, anxiety over oil problems increased in 1990, as did concern over international trade and foreign aid. The foreign aid response is particularly revealing. During the 1970s, a persistent 16–18% of the public complained that the U.S was sending too much aid to other countries. The number dropped to 9% in 1986 when our economic and military confidence peaked, but is now back to 18%.

The response of leaders reflects the same trend. Iraq and the Middle East top their foreign policy concerns. Although relations with the Soviet Union are still ranked third highest—a possible reflection of growing instability there at the end of 1990—concern actually dropped 25 percentage points from 46% in 1986 to only 21% in 1990. This is down even further from the height of concern (53%) over U.S.–Soviet relations in 1982. Similarly, concern over arms control was down 27 points from the 1986 high of 33% to 6% in 1990.

At the time of our polling in late 1990, both the public and the leaders showed surprisingly little concern over terrorism. We noted an 18-point drop among the public and a 10-point drop among the leaders, placing terrorism near the bottom of the list of foreign policy problems. Since the outbreak of war in January 1991, however, renewed concern over terrorist attacks may reverse this finding.

## FOREIGN POLICY GOALS

The Chicago Council once again asked the American public and leaders to rate the importance of 15 foreign policy goals; most have been tested in every survey since 1974. The latest survey reveals some continuity with the past, but also a number of striking changes in perceived American world objectives.

The three most important foreign policy goals for which the United States should strive according to the public are all economic: protecting the jobs of American workers, protecting the interests of American business abroad, and securing adequate supplies of energy (see Figure II–5). Reducing our trade deficit with other countries, listed "very important" by 56% of the public, ranks only slightly lower on the list.

Noticeably absent from the top of the public list is the goal of worldwide arms control. The public's listing of that as a "very important" goal of foreign policy has dropped by 16 percentage points, dramatically reflecting the waning Soviet military threat. From 1974 through 1986, between 64% and 69% of the public named worldwide arms control a "very important" goal. Although a majority of the public (53%) still believes arms control is "very important," the number is the lowest ever in our surveys.

Surprisingly, the goals of protecting American jobs and securing adequate energy supplies, though still at or near the top of the list, did not increase in importance since 1986. They actually fell slightly among both the public and leaders. Whereas three-quarters of the public between 1974 and 1986 considered protecting American jobs a "very important" foreign policy goal, that figure is now just under two-thirds. Securing adequate supplies of energy was considered "very important" by 3 out of 4 Americans in the 1970s; it is now considered "very important" by 3 out of 5.

The economic goal that has grown most dramatically in importance from 1986 to 1990 is protecting the interests of American business abroad. The percentage of Americans who consider this a "very important" foreign policy goal grew by no less than 20 points. This is the goal that comes closest to the notion of economic competitiveness and the one about which the threat from Japan is most keenly felt.

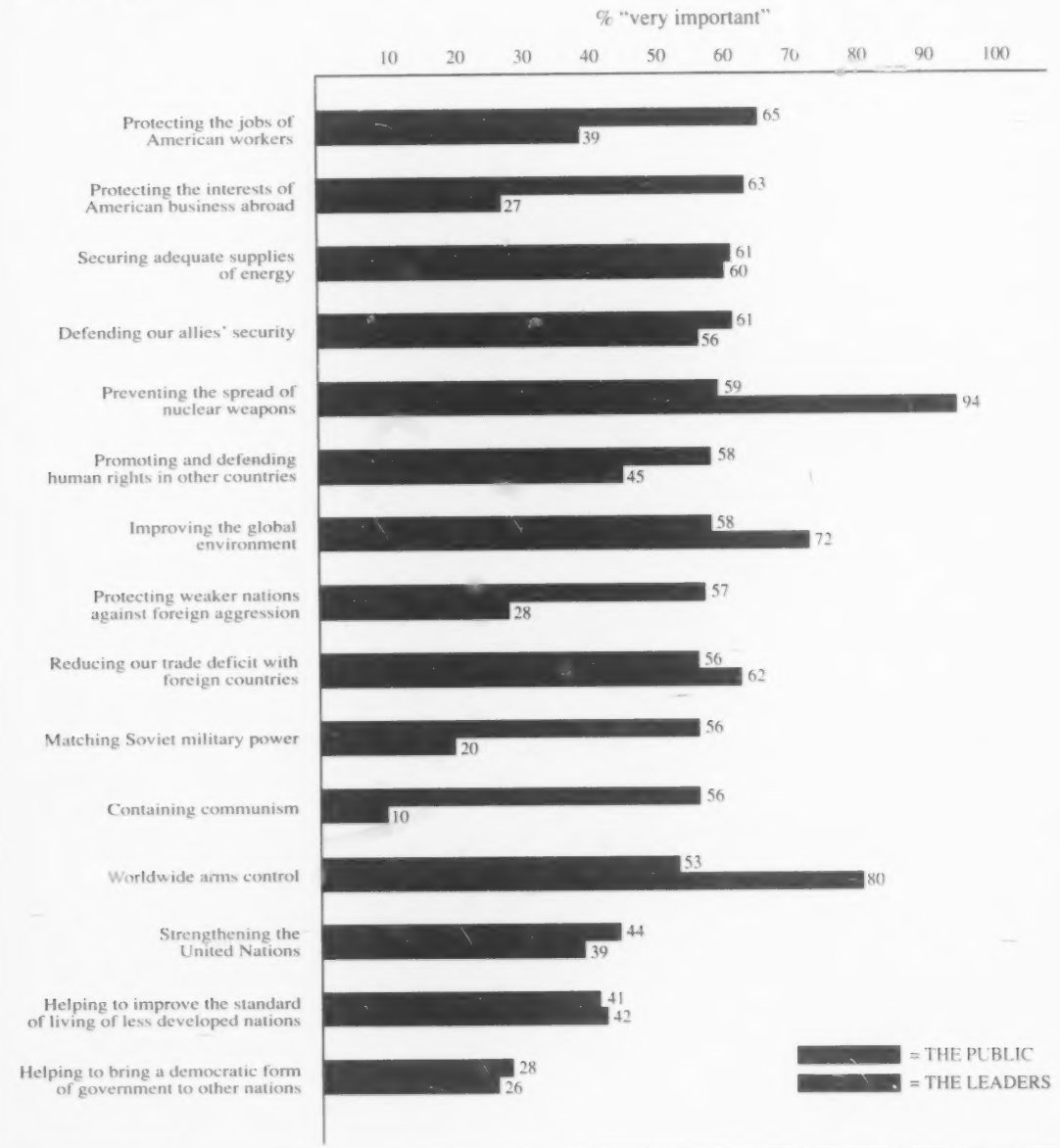
The three goals at the top of the list for leaders are globalist: preventing the spread of nuclear weapons, worldwide arms control, and improving the global environment. Even though the leaders are convinced that the Cold War is over, worldwide arms control has remained a highly salient issue for them, especially in view of the dangers presented by weapons of mass destruction in the hands of leaders like Saddam Hussein.

Leaders agree with the public on two economic goals: securing adequate supplies of energy and reducing our trade deficit with foreign countries. Both are given about the same rating by the leaders as by the public (about 60%). As in the past, leaders consider protecting American jobs and protecting American business interests far less important than does the public. These goals are near the bottom of the leaders' list and at the top of the public's.

It is interesting to note the reasons for this difference between the leaders and the public. Overall, leaders are much

## FIGURE II–5. FOREIGN POLICY GOALS

*"I am going to read a list of possible foreign policy goals that the United States might have. For each one, please say whether you think that it should be a very important foreign policy goal of the United States, a somewhat important foreign policy goal, or not an important goal at all."*



more sensitive to the issues of free trade and protectionism, supporting free trade policies (eliminating tariffs) by substantial margins. For that reason, leaders differentiate between what they regard as legitimate economic goals for U.S. foreign policy (securing adequate energy supplies, reducing our trade deficit) and protectionist goals that they perceive as far less legitimate (protecting American jobs and business interests).

Among leaders, Cold War goals have dropped sharply in relative importance. The percentage who say that matching Soviet military power is a "very important" goal dropped 38 points to 20%, a plurality now listing that goal as only "somewhat important." The percentage who consider containing communism a "very important" goal dropped 33 points to 10%, with a plurality now considering the goal "not important." A majority of leaders continues to feel that defending our allies security is "very important," but that goal, too, has lost salience (down 22 points).

The public seems less quick than the leaders to abandon goals relating to competition with the Soviet Union. Many of these goals remain almost unchanged in perceived importance. Sixty-one percent call defending our allies' security a "very important" goal, up five points since 1986. A majority of the public also continues to view matching Soviet military power and containing communism as "very important" foreign policy goals. Although the public's concern over the Soviet threat has certainly diminished, Cold War commitments have not attenuated as sharply as they have at the leadership level.

Two goals which have risen markedly in importance since 1986 are protecting weaker nations against foreign aggression and defending human rights. Previously, the former had been considered "very important" by no more than a third of Americans, the latter by 42%. Now, 57% say it is a "very important" goal of American foreign policy to protect weaker nations against foreign aggression (up 25 points since 1990), and 58% think the same about promoting and defending human rights in other countries. This finding is most likely colored by the U.S. reaction to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and Saddam Hussein's disregard for human rights, but is also in line with President Bush's notion of a "new world order."

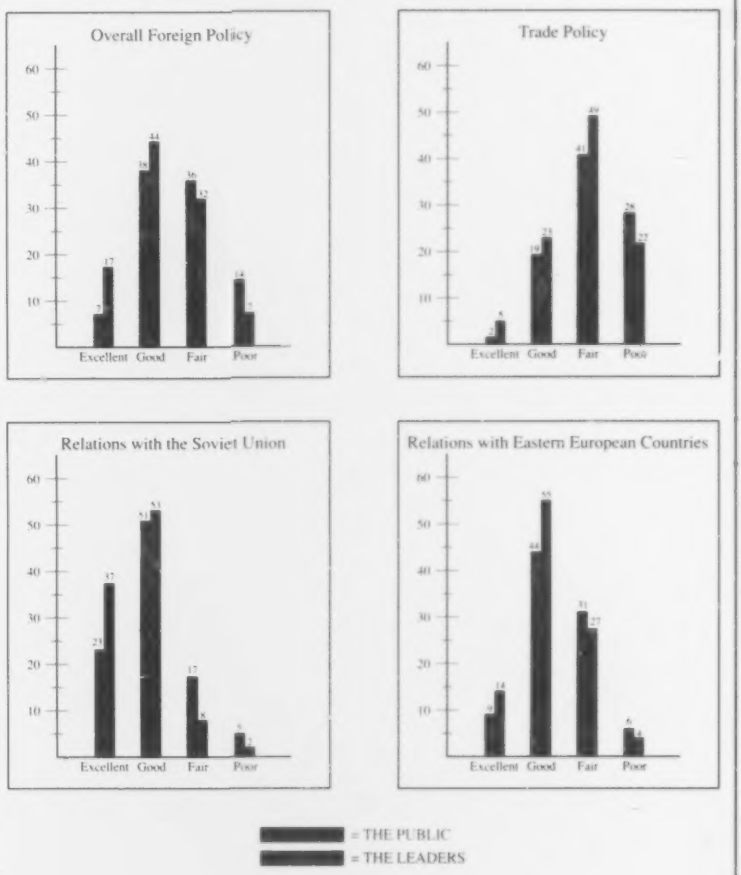
Among leaders, however, endorsement of such "new-world-order" principles remains almost unchanged since 1986. In fact, promoting and defending human rights and protecting weaker nations against foreign aggression are now considered more important by the public than by leaders, the latter considered "very important" by 57% of the public, more than twice the 28% figure for the leaders.

Strengthening the U.N. is rated relatively low on the public's list of foreign policy goals. Its salience is actually down slightly from 1986 and lower than it has been in the past. The U.N. has grown significantly in esteem among leaders, however, up 17 points since 1986. In the past, the public had always been substantially more favorable than leaders to the United Nations. The gap is now closing, the U.N. rating almost as highly among leaders as the public, even before the Security Council passed a resolution supporting U.S. policy in the Persian Gulf.

As in the past, the public rates such foreign policy goals as helping to improve the standard of living of less developed countries and helping to bring a democratic form of government to other nations

## FIGURE II–6.
## EVALUATION OF ADMINISTRATION'S PERFORMANCE

*"How do you rate the Bush Administration's handling of the following problems? Would you say the Administration's handling of . . . has been excellent, good, fair, or poor?"*



as less important. These goals rank relatively low among leaders as well, losing a little support from 1986. Apparently, "unself-interested internationalism" is still not very popular, whether it is of the liberal variety (improving the standard of living in poorer countries) or the conservative variety (exporting democracy to other countries).

## ADMINISTRATION RATINGS

How do goals translate into performance? The Chicago Council survey asked both the public and leaders to rate the Bush Administration's handling of various broad areas of foreign policy (see Figure II–6). The public is divided in its overall foreign policy rating: 45% give the Bush Administration a positive foreign policy rating (excellent or good) and 50% give it a negative rating (fair or poor). Leaders are 3-to-2 positive in their ratings. President Bush's much noted foreign policy expertise seems to be substantiated more in the leaders' responses than the general public's. In fact, among the general public, Bush's overall foreign policy ratings are lower than those given to the Reagan Administration four years ago (53% excellent or good, 43% fair or poor). Among leaders, on the other hand, Bush's foreign policy is definitely seen as an improvement over Reagan's. Not surprisingly, in the initial phase of the Iraq war begun in mid-January 1991, the President's rating shot up dramatically in public opinion polls everywhere.

Leaders are particularly pleased with President Bush's handling of the Cold War. They give the Bush Administration a 90% positive rating for its handling of relations with the Soviet Union, a 69% positive rating for handling of relations with Eastern Europe and a 63% positive rating for handling of arms control. The ratings on the Soviet Union and on arms control are substantially higher than those given to the Reagan Administration four years ago (up 49 and 21 points, respectively).

The public also gives the Bush Administration high ratings on the Soviet Union (74% positive) and Eastern Europe (53% positive). The rating on the Soviet Union is 35 points higher than the public's rating of the Reagan Administration on this issue four years ago. The big discrepancy comes on the issue of arms control. Only 39% of the public give the Bush Administration an excellent/good rating on arms control, while 53% rate it fair/poor—numbers slightly lower than the ratings for the Reagan Administration in 1986.

Both the public and the leaders give the Bush Administration mild ratings on handling relations with Japan (40% and 36% positive, respectively) and trade policy (21% and 28% positive). Indeed, Bush's ratings for management of trade policy are lower than those of the Reagan Administration in 1986. These findings reinforce the conclusion that Americans see two contradictory trends in U.S. foreign policy—military success and economic failure.

In autumn 1990, both the public and leaders gave the Bush Administration a positive rating for its handling of the Iraq crisis (3-to-2 positive by the public, 5-to-2 positive by the leaders). On the issue of the Middle East overall, however, enthusiasm was more contained. On balance, the public gave the Bush Administration a slightly negative rating (51% fair/poor, 44% excellent/good) on the Middle East at the time of our survey. Leaders were evenly split.

Neither the public nor leaders perceive much progress in three areas: terrorism, drugs and relations with Latin America. The public and leaders rate Bush's handling of terrorism 65% and 64% fair/poor, respectively. The Bush Administration's highly publicized war on drugs does not seem to have produced many results. The public gives Bush a 3-to-1 negative rating on handling the drug problem; leaders give him a 5-to-1 negative rating.

The same holds true for Latin American relations. Nobody seems to give the Bush Administration much credit for resolving the crises in Nicaragua and Panama or proposing new initiatives on trade or international debt problems. The Bush Administration's ratings on Latin America are about the same as its ratings on the drug problem: 3-to-1 negative in public opinion, 4-to-1 negative in leadership opinion. In the specific case of Panama, the apparent triumphant U.S. intervention did not make a lasting impression on the public. Americans give the Administration only a 5-to-4 positive rating for its handling of that intervention. Leaders actually give the Administration 4-to-3 negative ratings on Panama.

In summary, the high point of the Bush Administration's foreign policy until the end of 1990 was clearly the handling of the Cold War and the Soviet Union. Ratings from other polls on Iraq and the Middle East have been fluctuating during the emotional time of war, but at the time of this writing were quite high after the apparent initial successes of the allied air attack on Iraq. On trade policy, drugs and relations with Latin America, neither the public nor leaders considered these strong areas for the Administration.

The public and the leaders tend to agree on where the Administration has succeeded and where it has failed—with the notable exception of arms control. The public seems to weigh the failures more heavily than the successes; it gives the Bush Administration lower marks on foreign policy than it gave the Reagan Administration. Leaders are more impressed by Bush's successes, particularly his handling of the Cold War, Soviet relations and arms control. Overall, they view Bush as an improvement over Reagan in handling world affairs. Whether this judgement will persist will depend in considerable part on the outcome of the Iraq war and the post-war settlement in the Middle East.

# CHAPTER THREE
# POLITICAL RELATIONSHIPS

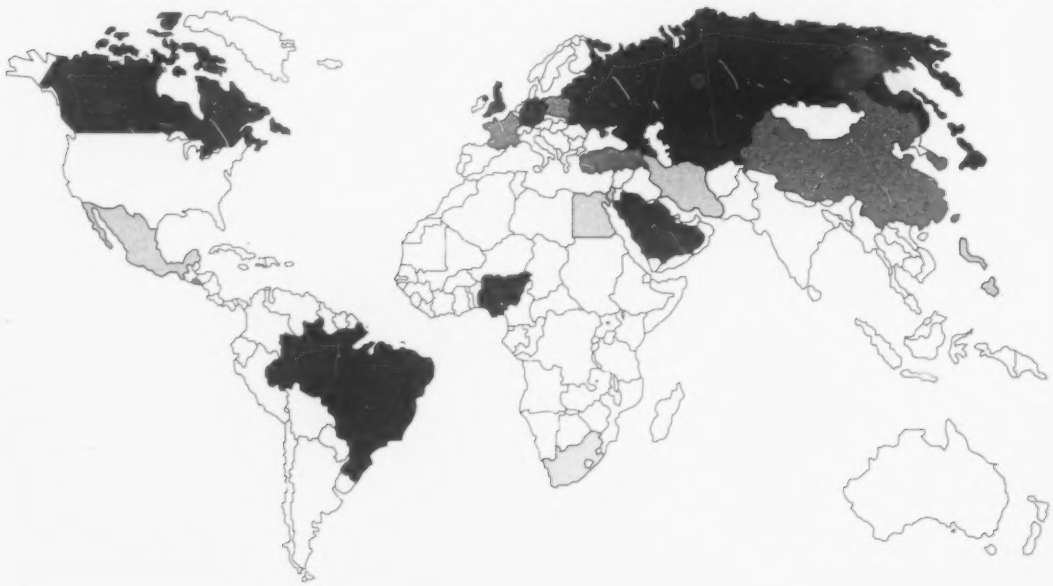
*As noted, the American public and our sample of leaders reacted at the end of 1990 to a global landscape drastically transformed from that of four years earlier. How has this affected Americans' attitudes about other nations and leaders around the globe? Where in the world are America's most vital interests? How do Americans perceive U.S. relations with the rest of the world?*

## VITAL INTERESTS

Most Americans continue to believe that the U.S. has a vital interest in many areas of the world. That is, certain countries are important to the U.S. for political, economic or security reasons. When members of the general public were asked about 22 different countries, majorities identified 15 of them—ranging from Saudi Arabia and the Soviet Union to Egypt and South Africa—as countries in which the U.S. has a vital interest. Majorities of the leaders believe the U.S. has a stake in 15 of the 16 countries they were asked about, including China, France, and Brazil (see Figure III–1 and Figure III–2).

The results reflect more than simple awareness that the U.S. has interests around the globe; Americans draw definite distinctions between countries. Vital interest percentages vary from as high as 83% for some countries to as low as 29% for others. As Figure III–2 indicates, countries considered most vital to the U.S. are key military and economic partners: Saudi Arabia, Japan, Britain, Canada and Germany, and newcomers, Kuwait and the Soviet Union. One striking finding is the significant drop in the perceived vital interest levels in many countries around the world since the 1986 survey. There are marked declines with respect to the People's Republic of China, the Phil-

FIGURE III–1. PERCEPTIONS OF THE U.S. VITAL INTERESTS — 1990 (THE PUBLIC)



■ — **OVER 70%** Saudi Arabia The Soviet Union Japan Great Britain Kuwait Canada Germany*
■ — **51%-70%** Israel Mexico The Philippines Iran Egypt South Africa
■ — **41%-50%** El Salvador South Korea The People's Republic of China Taiwan France Poland Turkey
■ — **40% & LESS** Brazil Nigeria

*In surveys prior to 1990 this was asked as West Germany

ippines, Mexico, France, South Korea, Israel, Egypt, and Taiwan. Only Poland and Saudi Arabia rose in perceived importance to the public.

Much the same is true among the leadership. A 30-point decline was recorded in the proportion of leaders who consider the Philippines a U.S. vital interest. Notable drops were also recorded with respect to France, China, South Africa, Brazil, Israel, Great Britain, and Canada.

The decline in perceived vital interests in many areas of the world may represent a natural shifting of focus at the close of the Cold War, as people are no longer preoccupied with a fear of communism spreading around the globe. It may also reflect a turn of attention to the immediate crisis in the Persian Gulf. Kuwait, seen as vital to U.S. interests by 77% of the public in 1990, did not appear on our poll in 1986. Notably, Saudi Arabia, which has always been near the top of the vital interests list, ties for first with the Soviet Union among the public. Japan and Germany tie for first among the leaders' vital interest rankings, a sign of their key geopolitical and economic importance to the United States. Our neighbors Canada and Mexico are among the next three important countries to the leaders, perhaps a reflection of growing sentiment for close regional trading alliances to maintain global economic competitiveness.

### THREATS TO U.S. VITAL INTERESTS

Both public and leaders were asked about possible "threats" to the vital interests of the United States, related to the Soviet Union, Japan, Europe and China. Figure III–3 summarizes the responses and underscores evidence that Japan is viewed as a "critical" threat by clear majorities of the public and leaders.

### THE "FEELING THERMOMETER" FOR COUNTRIES

In addition to assessing the importance of various countries in terms of U.S. vital interests, the public was asked to express general attitudes toward each of 23 countries. People were asked to rate the countries on a "feeling thermometer" ranging from 0 to 100 degrees. Warm feelings toward a country meant they gave it a temperature higher than 50 degrees. The average, i.e. mean, rating for each country is shown in Figure III–4.

As in all the Chicago Council surveys, the public feels most favorably toward Britain and Canada, followed by Germany and Italy. Most striking is the remarkable 27-degree jump in average feeling toward the Soviet Union, documenting approval of perestroika, glasnost, and the cooperative foreign policy of that country in the months preceding the survey. The current 59-degree rating puts the USSR among Americans' most favored countries. Likewise, Poland, ruled by the non-communist Solidarity regime, enjoys a warm 57-degree average public rating. In light of the widely publicized crackdown on pro-democracy demonstrators in Beijing in June 1989, the People's Republic of China dropped an average of 8 degrees to a cool 45.

The thermometer ratings of other countries hint at some of the pressures from international economic competition. Two vigorous competitors from the newly industrialized world, Taiwan and South Korea receive cool ratings of 48 and 47 degrees respectively. Japan, a major U.S.

## FIGURE III–2. VITAL INTERESTS

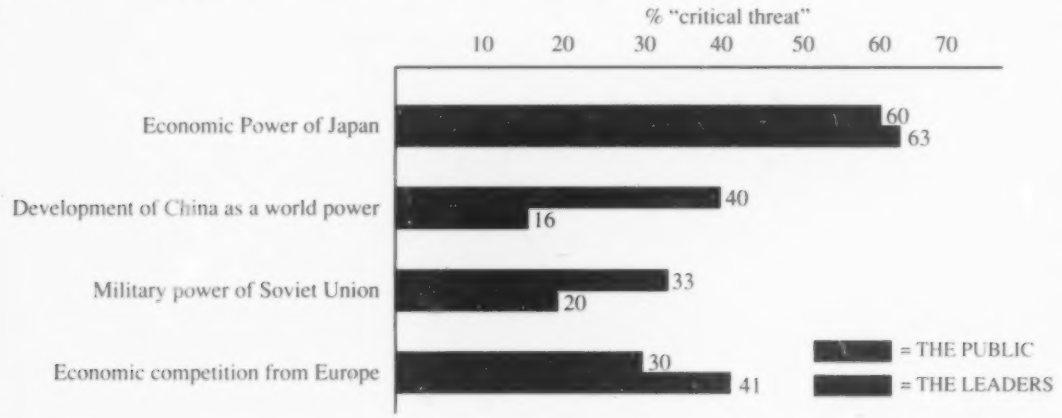
*"Many people believe that the United States has a vital interest in certain areas of the world and not in others. That is, certain countries of the world are important to the U.S. for political, economic or security reasons. I am going to read a list of countries. For each, tell me whether you feel the U.S. does or does not have a vital interest in that country."*

| | 1990 | | 1986 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | THE PUBLIC | THE LEADERS | THE PUBLIC | THE LEADERS |
| Saudi Arabia | 83% | 89% | 77% | 88% |
| The Soviet Union | 83 | 93 | — | — |
| Japan | 79 | 95 | 77 | 98 |
| Great Britain | 79 | 86 | 83 | 94 |
| Kuwait | 77 | 69 | — | — |
| Canada | 77 | 90 | 78 | 96 |
| Germany* | 73 | 95 | 77 | 98 |
| Israel | 67 | 78 | 76 | 86 |
| Mexico | 63 | 94 | 74 | 96 |
| The Philippines | 62 | 51 | 74 | 81 |
| Iran | 56 | — | 51 | — |
| Egypt | 53 | 76 | 61 | — |
| South Africa | 53 | 50 | 58 | 63 |
| El Salvador | 50 | — | — | — |
| South Korea | 49 | — | 58 | 80 |
| The Peoples' Republic Of China | 47 | 73 | 60 | 89 |
| Taiwan | 46 | 47 | 53 | 48 |
| France | 45 | 63 | 56 | 82 |
| Poland | 43 | — | 35 | — |
| Turkey | 41 | — | — | — |
| Brazil | 39 | 51 | 44 | 63 |
| Nigeria | 29 | — | 31 | — |

*In surveys prior to 1990 this was asked as West Germany

## FIGURE III–3. THREATS TO U.S. VITAL INTERESTS

*"I am going to read you a list of possible threats to the vital interest of the United States in the next 10 years. For each one, please tell me if you see this as a critical threat, an important but not critical threat, or not an important threat at all." The graph illustrates the percentage who view each item as a "critical threat" to the vital interest of the United States.*




ally and trading partner, suffered a 9-degree drop to 52 degrees. A more critical view of Japan, at a time when many Americans feel the U.S. is losing its competitive edge, is one of the main themes emerging from this survey.

### THE "FEELING THERMOMETER" FOR WORLD LEADERS

Members of the public were also asked to rate a list of 18 world leaders on the "feeling thermometer," again ranging from 0 to 100 degrees, 50 degrees being neutral. The public's average (mean) rating for each leader was computed and is displayed in Figure III–5.

The Pope has led the popularity list in each of the last three Chicago Council surveys; British Prime Minister Thatcher (still in office during the field work for this report) also held her second place position in the last three surveys.

Confirming the dramatic rise in favorability toward the Soviet Union is the emergence of President Mikhail Gorbachev in the top rankings, on a par with U.S. President George Bush. This is a 22-degree rise from the cool 42 degrees he received in 1986 when he had been at the helm of the Soviet Union for only one year. Gorbachev's rating in 1990 contrasts with the negative 31-degree rating of Soviet Premier Leonid Brezhnev in 1982.

It is interesting to note the public perception of three former U.S. presidents, Richard Nixon, Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan. Carter has consistently received a warm average rating since his presidency (56 degrees in 1990). Reagan has fallen 13 degrees from 1986, when he was still in office. Nixon averaged 44 degrees in 1990, up 6 degrees from 1982 and holding steady from 1986.

Among world leaders rated on the moderately cool side were Japanese Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir.

In all four of the past Chicago Council surveys, the bottom of the feeling thermometer has been reserved for leaders branded American enemies: Idi Amin of Uganda in 1978; the Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran in 1982; Libyan President Mu'ammar Gaddafi and Cuba's Fidel Castro in 1986. Castro remains close to the bottom, with newcomer Saddam Hussein of Iraq recording the all-time low of 9 degrees on the thermometer scale.

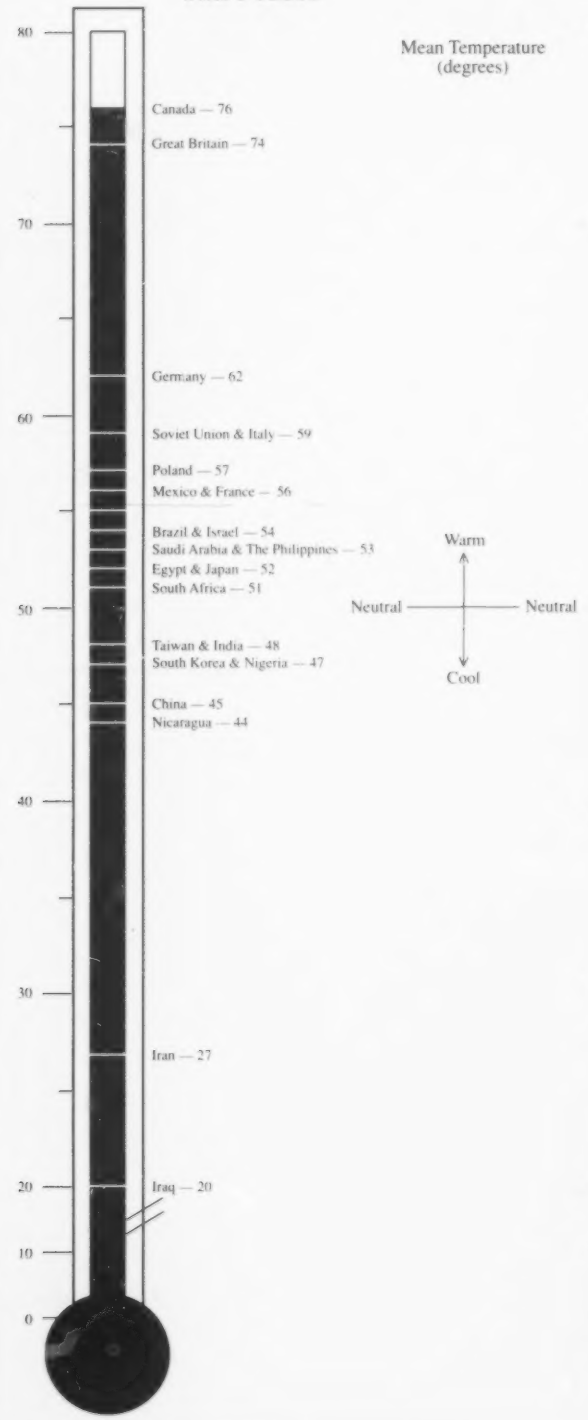
### U.S.–SOVIET RELATIONS

For more than forty years after World War II, U.S. foreign policy focused on the Soviet Union. The 1990 survey reflects public recognition that the world has changed. Responses indicate that for many Americans the Cold War no longer dominates their thinking and that the Soviet threat has diminished substantially. Attitudes toward the Soviet Union are summarized in Figure III–6.

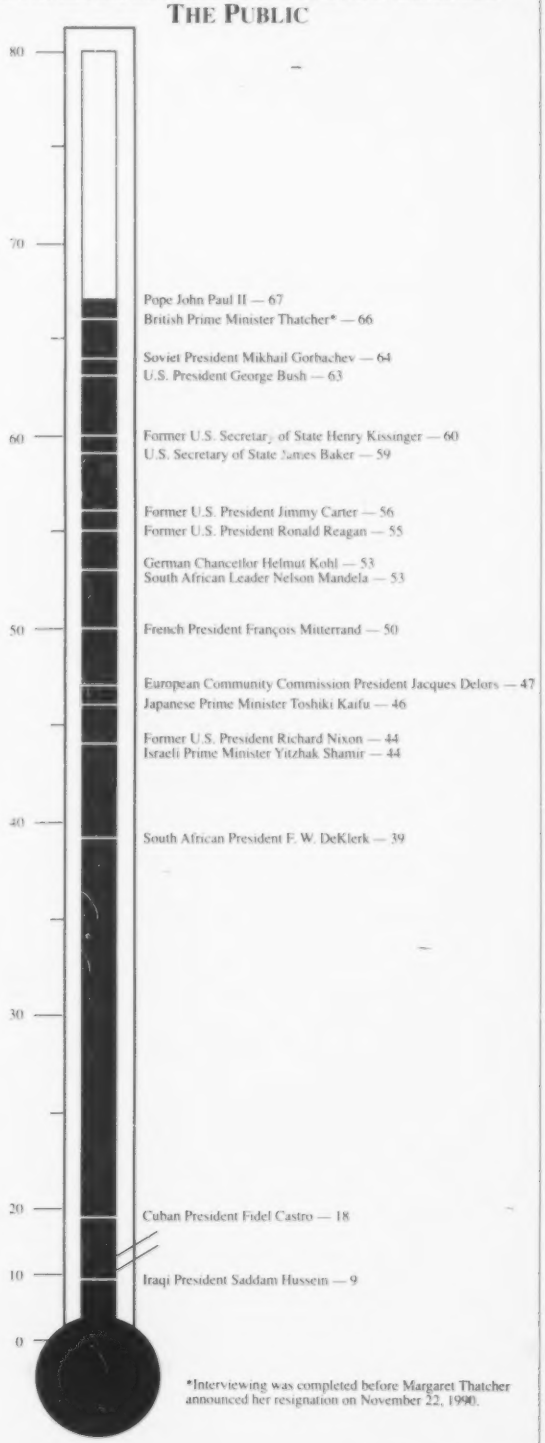
Overall, favorability toward the Soviet Union has risen dramatically, with majorities of the public endorsing peaceful, cooperative policies. Only 28% favor restricting U.S.–Soviet trade, down 9 percentage points from 1986 and down 19 points from 1982. Fifty-six percent of the public oppose a ban on the exchange of scientists between the two countries, and 82% favor negotiating arms control agreements. In a remarkable sign of the times, a substantial majority (69%) of the public favors "working with Soviet military units to increase stability in the Middle East," an idea that would have been unthinkable only a few years earlier.

Despite the positive trends in perceptions of the Soviet Union, some caution still remains, especially on security issues (see Chapter Five). Leaders, on the other hand, are overwhelmingly convinced that the Cold War is over. Ninety-one percent of the leaders oppose restrictions on trade, 88% favor the exchange of scientists, 99% favor negotiating arms control agreements, and 83% favor working with Soviet military units in the Middle East. Only with respect to sharing missile information and limiting the sales of advanced computers do about half the leaders still favor restrictive measures, although the proportion favoring com-

## FIGURE III–4.
## THERMOMETER RATINGS FOR COUNTRIES – THE PUBLIC




## FIGURE III–5.
## THERMOMETER RATINGS FOR WORLD LEADERS – THE PUBLIC


80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
Pope John Paul II — 67
British Prime Minister Thatcher* — 66
Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev — 64
U.S. President George Bush — 63
Former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger — 60
U.S. Secretary of State James Baker — 59
Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter — 56
Former U.S. President Ronald Reagan — 55
German Chancellor Helmut Kohl — 53
South African Leader Nelson Mandela — 53
French President François Mitterrand — 50
European Community Commission President Jacques Delors — 47
Japanese Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu — 46
Former U.S. President Richard Nixon — 44
Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir — 44
South African President F. W. DeKlerk — 39
Cuban President Fidel Castro — 18
Iraqi President Saddam Hussein — 9

*Interviewing was completed before Margaret Thatcher announced her resignation on November 22, 1990.

## FIGURE III–6.
## COUNTRY SNAPSHOT
## U.S.S.R.

**1990** **1986**

**Mean temperature received on "Feeling Thermometer" (warm > 50 > cool):**

| Public | Public |
|---|---|
| 59 | 32 |

**Percentage citing Soviet related issues when asked,"What do you feel are the two or three biggest problems facing the United States?"**

| Public | Leaders | Public | Leaders |
|---|---|---|---|
| 3% | 21% | 22% | 46% |

**Percentage who consider the Soviet Union a vital interest to the United States:**

| Public | Leaders |
|---|---|
| 83% | 93% |

**Percentage who view the military power of the Soviet Union as a critical threat to the United States in the next 10 years:**

| Public | Leaders |
|---|---|
| 33% | 20% |

**Percentage who view the Soviet Union as the main adversary of the United States in the next 10 years:**

| Public | Leaders |
|---|---|
| 18% | 8% |

**Percentage who agree/disagree with the statement, "The Cold War is not really over and you cannot really trust the Russians."**

| Public | Leaders |
|---|---|
| *Agree strongly/somewhat* | |
| 64% | 25% |
| *Disagree strongly/somewhat* | |
| 34% | 73% |

**Rating of Administration's handling of relations with the Soviet Union:**

| Public | Leaders | Public | Leaders |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Excellent/Good* | | | |
| 74% | 90% | 39% | 41% |
| *Fair/Poor* | | | |
| 22% | 10% | 56% | 58% |

## FIGURE III–7.
## COUNTRY SNAPSHOT
## EUROPE

**1990** **1986**

**Mean temperature received on "Feeling Thermometer" (warm > 50 > cool):**

| Public | | Public |
|---|---|---|
| 74 | *Britain* | 73 |
| 62 | *Germany* | 62 |
| 56 | *France* | 58 |
| 59 | *Italy* | 58 |

**Percentage who say the United States does have a vital interest in European countries:**

| Public | Leaders | Public | Leaders |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Britain* | | | |
| 79% | 86% | 83% | 94% |
| *Germany* | | | |
| 73% | 95% | 76% | 98% |
| *France* | | | |
| 45% | 63% | 56% | 82% |

**Percentage who view economic competition from Europe as a critical threat to the United States in the next 10 years:**

| Public | Leaders |
|---|---|
| 30% | 41% |

**Percentage who view Germany as the main adversary of the United States in the next 10 years:**

| Public | Leaders |
|---|---|
| 4% | 4% |

**Percentage who would favor the use of U.S. troops if the Soviet Union invaded Western Europe:**

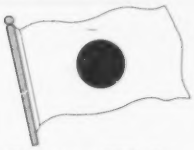
| Public | Leaders |
|---|---|
| 58% | 87% |

**Percentage who believe the economic unification of Western Europe will be mostly a good/bad thing for the United States:**

| Public | Leaders | |
|---|---|---|
| 48% | 79% | *Mostly good* |
| 28% | 17% | *Mostly bad* |
| 24% | 4% | *Don't know* |

**Percentage who believe the European Community practices fair/unfair trade with the United States:**

| Public | Leaders | |
|---|---|---|
| 31% | 56% | *Fair* |
| 40% | 38% | *Unfair* |
| 29% | 6% | *Don't know* |



## FIGURE III–8.
## COUNTRY SNAPSHOT
## JAPAN

**1990** **1986**

**Mean temperature received on "Feeling Thermometer" (warm > 50 > cool):**

| Public | | Public |
|---|---|---|
| | *Japan* | |
| 52 | | 61 |
| | *Prime Minister* | |
| 46 *(Kaifu)* | | 50 *(Nakasone)* |

**Percentage who say the United States does have a vital interest in Japan:**

| Public | Leaders | Public | Leaders |
|---|---|---|---|
| 79% | 95% | 77% | 98% |

**Percentage who view the economic power of Japan as a critical threat to the United States in the next 10 years:**

| Public | Leaders |
|---|---|
| 60% | 63% |

**Percentage who view Japan as the main adversary of the United States in the next 10 years:**

| Public | Leaders |
|---|---|
| 17% | 17% |

**Percentage who would favor the use of U.S. troops if the Japan were invaded by the Soviet Union:**

| Public | Leaders |
|---|---|
| 39% | 73% |

**Percentage who believe Japan practices unfair trade with the United States:**

| Public | Leaders |
|---|---|
| 71% | 78% |

**Rating of Bush Administration's handling of relations with Japan:**

| Public | Leaders |
|---|---|
| *Excellent/Good* | |
| 40% | 36% |
| *Fair/Poor* | |
| 51% | 63% |

puter restrictions is down 30 points from 1986. In a particularly sharp contrast with the general public, 70% of the leaders favor "providing economic aid to the Soviet Union to assist it in modernizing its economy," a gap similar to those throughout our surveys on the issue of economic aid.

**EUROPE**

As findings about vital interests and thermometer rankings indicate, several European nations—especially Britain and Germany—remain America's closest friends. These countries are seen as very important to U.S. interests and are held in high regard. At the same time, the American public's view of Europe has been strongly affected by two major trends: the decline of the Soviet military threat and the rise of economic competition.

The fading of the Cold War has increased the number of respondents who want to decrease our commitment to NATO, although a solid majority (56%) of the public still favors keeping our commitment the same (see Chapter Five).

In economic relations, a solid plurality of the public and a large majority of leaders view the economic unification of Western Europe as a positive development, although there is still some concern among the public about economic competition from Europe (see Chapter Four). Attitudes toward Europe are summarized in Figure III–7.

**JAPAN**

The fading of the Cold War and rising concerns about economic competition have also affected attitudes toward Japan. While Japan remains a key U.S. ally and trading partner, near the top in terms of perceived "vital interests," there can be no doubt that regard for Japan has cooled among the general public. The chief indicators of this are the lukewarm thermometer rating of Japan itself, the cool rating of Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu, and the high number of those regarding Japan as a "critical threat" to U.S. vital interests and as an unfair trading partner (see Chapter Four). Attitudes toward Japan are summarized in Figure III–8.

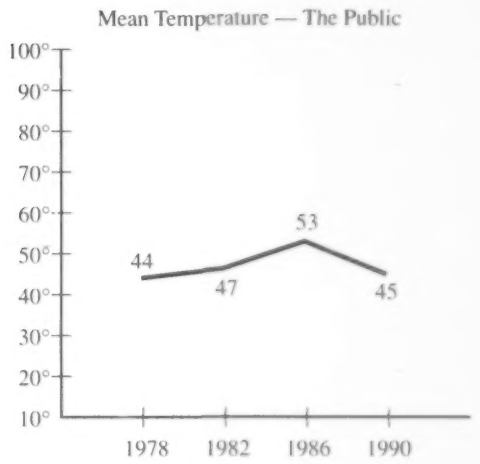
**IRAQ, SAUDI ARABIA AND KUWAIT**

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990, rekindled debates over our military preparedness and strength. President Bush declared U.S. support to defend Saudi Arabia and to counter Iraqi aggression. The President secured international backing and had dispatched more than 200,000 troops to the Persian Gulf region at the time of our survey. President Bush's announcement on November 8, 1990, of a further large increase in forces to ensure an offensive capability came after nearly all interviewing was completed.

These events catapulted the Middle East to the top of the foreign policy agenda. Most Americans approved of the administration's early handling of the situation. Thermometer ratings clearly reflect this. Saudi Arabia (site of many of the world's oil reserves) was declared vitally important to the United States by 83% of the public, up 6 points from 1986 and tied with the Soviet Union for first place among all the countries on our list. Furthermore, 52% of the public, with only 37% opposed, favored the use of U.S. troops if Iraq invaded Saudi Arabia, a level of support higher than in eight other situations asked about, and second only to a hypothetical Soviet invasion of Western Europe. Among leaders, the 89% supporting the use of troops to defend Saudi Arabia was highest among all the situations polled. As of late 1990, public and leadership commitment to defend Saudi Arabia was solid.

Public attitudes concerning what to do about Kuwait, however, were decidedly mixed. On one hand, a large majority of the public (77%) perceived Kuwait as a "vital interest" of the U.S. On the other hand, our survey found only 42% in support of using U.S. troops "if Iraq refused to withdraw from Kuwait," while 45% were opposed, a clear contrast to the willingness to defend Saudi Arabia. Once hostilities began in the Persian Gulf, however, support for using U.S. troops rose substantially in all surveys.

**FIGURE III–9. CHINA THERMOMETER RATING**




**ISRAEL**

The focus on Iraq, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia naturally diverted some attention from Israel, a key U.S. ally in the Middle East. Our survey documented evidence of a more critical view toward Israel at the close of 1990. Perceptions of a U.S. "vital interest" in Israel dropped significantly between 1986 and 1990, from 76% to 67%. Asked whether sympathy was more with Israel or the Palestinians, 34% of public respondents said Israel, 13% sympathized more with the Palestinians, 7% volunteered "both," and 26% volunteered "neither." Among the leadership sample, sympathies were about evenly divided: 33% sympathized with Israel and 35% with the Palestinians, a dramatic shift from 1982 when leaders sympathized with Israel by a 42%–26% margin over the Palestinians. As already noted, Israel was rated mildly favorable at 54 degrees on our feeling thermometer, a slip from 61 degrees in 1978 and 59 degrees in 1986. Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir was given a cool rating of 44 degrees.

There was one notable exception to

## FIGURE III–10. DEPENDENCY ON FOREIGN OIL

*"I am going to read you a list of possible policy options to reduce U.S. dependence on foreign oil. As I read each one, please tell me whether you would support or oppose that particular option."*

| | THE PUBLIC | | THE LEADERS | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Support | Oppose | Support | Oppose |
| Developing alternative energy sources to oil | 93% | 3% | 98% | 1% |
| Requiring cars to get better gas mileage | 93 | 5 | 91 | 7 |
| Allowing more offshore oil drilling | 65 | 28 | 55 | 43 |
| Imposing a limit on the amount of oil that can be imported | 50 | 37 | 23 | 75 |
| Giving oil companies a tax break for exploring for new sources of oil | 49 | 44 | 51 | 47 |
| Taxing imported oil | 42 | 49 | 75 | 24 |
| Building more nuclear power plants | 32 | 58 | 56 | 41 |
| Imposing an additional 25-cents-per-gallon tax on gasoline | 11 | 85 | 62 | 38 |

these and other indications of a more critical stance toward Israel in our survey. A larger proportion of the public than ever before (43%, up 11 points from 1986) expressed willingness to use U.S. troops "if Arab forces invaded Israel." Although this 43% did not constitute a majority (43% were also opposed), it did signify a sharp increase.

The balance of support for economic aid to Israel tipped toward cutting back, with 45% of the public in favor of decreasing or altogether stopping aid, 38% in favor of keeping it the same, and only 8% favoring an increase. This does remain consistent with the public's overall reluctance to support economic aid to other countries. Leaders favored cutting back or stopping economic aid to Israel by 54%, with 41% in favor of keeping it the same and 4% favoring an increase.

The picture is similar for military aid to Israel, reflecting growing opposition overall to military aid. Only 8% of the public (6% of the leaders) favored increasing military aid to Israel, even though this was the highest number of the six countries asked about (see Chapter Four, Figure IV–7). Thirty-five percent of the public and 36% of the leaders favored keeping it the same, while 50% and 58%, respectively, voted to decrease or stop aid. The sale of arms—long an unpopular policy with most Americans—remained unpopular in regard to Israel. The general public, by 49% to 10%, and the leaders, by 46% to 9%, favored cutting rather than increasing the sale of military equipment to Israel.

The Palestinian issue was raised in a question concerning what approaches the U.S. should take "with regard to the issue of the Israeli-occupied territories and the possibility of a Palestinian homeland." Of the four choices given (let Israel do what it thinks best; exert diplomatic pressure; reduce economic and military assistance if Israel does not negotiate a settlement; and cut off all economic and military aid if Israel does not negotiate a settlement), only 24% of the public and a bare 6% of the leaders said the U.S. "should not pressure Israel at all and should let Israel pursue whatever policy it thinks best." Thirty-seven percent of the public and 57% of the leaders favored something beyond diplomatic pressure, either reducing economic and military assistance if Israel does not negotiate a settlement (20% and 50%) or cutting it off completely (17% and 7%).

Thus, in late 1990, both public and leadership attitudes toward Israel were increasingly critical. The actual outbreak of the war in January 1991 may shift opinion again. In the face of missile attacks from Iraq, the Israeli government responded initially with remarkable restraint. The forbearance, courage and discipline demonstrated by the Israeli people and conveyed to millions of Americans on television is likely to have a favorable impact on both public and leadership opinion.

### CHINA, CUBA, AND VIETNAM

The decline of the Cold War and the "communist threat" has not altered the public's negative reaction toward the hardline communist states China, Cuba, and Vietnam. Despite a history of good U.S.–Chinese relations since the beginning of the 1970s, and President Bush's personal experience in China and his ties with that country, the Chinese government's crackdown on pro-democracy demonstrators in June 1989 delivered a blow to the country's image among Americans, reflected in the cool thermometer rating (see Figure III–9). In addition, a substantial 40% of the public considered the possible development of China as a world power a "critical" threat to the vital interests of the U.S.

As in the past, Cuba remains out of favor with Americans, evidenced by Premier Fidel Castro's ranking near the bottom of our feeling thermometer for world leaders.

But cool feelings toward these communist states do not stand in the way of public desires to normalize relations. A substantial majority (60% of both leaders and the public) agrees with the sentiment that "the time has come to resume normal economic and trade relations with the People's Republic of China." Similarly, a plurality of the general public (and a much higher 85% of the leaders) say they

think the U.S. should restore normal diplomatic relations with Vietnam. The public is evenly divided on entering into negotiations with Cuba, "looking toward reestablishing diplomatic and economic relations and exchanging ambassadors," although the leaders heavily favor such an initiative by 76% to 23%. This confirms a pattern from our surveys over the years, even during the height of the Cold War: most Americans want to negotiate with and keep open diplomatic relations with other countries, even those held in low esteem.

### LATIN AMERICA

The public accords a relatively low priority to Latin America. In terms of U.S. vital interests, only Mexico ranks relatively high (63%), although substantially below 1986. El Salvador, still fighting a leftist insurgency, does not command nearly as much concern as Nicaragua did four years ago. Brazil ranks near the bottom of the list. To be sure, the leadership sample assigns Mexico a much higher place near the top of the world's countries in terms of U.S. vital interests. Both Mexico and Brazil receive fairly warm thermometer ratings from the public, and both leaders and the public overwhelmingly support a "free trade agreement with Mexico. But in general there is little desire to commit substantial U.S. resources, economic or otherwise, to the Latin American region.

The major exception to the general unpopularity of foreign economic aid to Latin America is related to the drug problem. Substantially more members of the public (37%) want to increase than want to decrease or stop (21%) economic aid to "South American countries that are combatting the drug problem." This is the only one of six situations we asked about in which the balance of opinion favors an increase in economic aid.

### ASIA AND AFRICA

Even more than Latin America, most countries of Asia and Africa attract little interest in 1990. Japan is naturally an important exception, and there is some continued interest among the public, though less from leaders, in the Philippines. Both China and South Africa arouse some concern about human rights.

The newly industrializing countries South Korea and Taiwan do not rank high as U.S. vital interests and receive fairly cool thermometer ratings. Majorities of the public favor decreasing or stopping both military aid and arms sales to South Korea, just as they favor cutting arms sales to Pakistan.

The low level of public commitment is even more marked with respect to less developed countries such as Nigeria, which receive a very low "vital interest" rating and a fairly cool score on the feeling thermometer. India also receives a cool thermometer rating. "Combatting world hunger," which has always been seen as a top foreign policy goal among the public, appears to be related mainly to famine relief and other emergency measures. The goal of "helping to improve the standard of living of less developed nations" receives a rather lukewarm response. When asked specifically about the level of economic aid to "underdeveloped nations in Africa and Asia," a slightly higher proportion of the public (27%) wants to cut or stop such aid than wants an increase (23%). While our sample of leaders expresses continuing strong support for developmental aid, public support for such assistance appears particularly weak.

### OIL DEPENDENCY AND DRUGS

To conclude this chapter, we focus on possible solutions to two problems related to foreign policy that are high on both the public's and leaders' list of major concerns. The war in the Persian Gulf has once again raised questions about America's dependency on foreign oil, especially from that region. Figure III–10 summarizes the policies that the public and leaders are most and least likely to support.

The drug problem is also important for our relations with Latin American countries. Although the public and the leaders believe that we should focus on the problem primarily at home, there is substantial willingness to allocate U.S. economic and military resources to working with drug-producing and -exporting nations to combat the problem. Figure III–11 summarizes the findings.

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## FIGURE III–11. THE DRUG PROBLEM

*"I am going to read you a list of ways the United States could attempt to deal with the problem of illegal drugs such as cocaine and heroin coming into the U.S. For each one, tell me whether you would favor or oppose that particular approach."*

| | THE PUBLIC | | THE LEADERS | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Favor | Oppose | Favor | Oppose |
| Concentrating on education and enforcement here in the U.S. | 94% | 3% | 98% | 1% |
| Using our police and military in cooperation with other governments to help them stop drug trafficking | 89 | 8 | 79 | 20 |
| Providing economic assistance to help farmers in drug-producing countries to grow different crops | 66 | 28 | 85 | 14 |
| Using our military forces to intervene in other countries even if their governments will not cooperate | 32 | 61 | 9 | 90 |
| Legalizing all drugs here in the U.S. | 8 | 88 | 13 | 85 |

# CHAPTER FOUR
# ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIPS

*We have seen that Americans' perception of foreign policy is often colored by economic concerns. What are America's chief economic concerns and how do they impact our relations with other countries? In this section we will look at the current state of opinion on a wide range of American economic relationships in a world of rapid change.*

### INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COMPETITION

After the inflation and recession crises of the late 1970s and the early 1980s, our 1986 survey documented an abrupt and sharp decline in the proportion of Americans who viewed domestic economic issues, especially unemployment, among the biggest problems facing the country. At the time of our survey, the gathering economic storm had not yet reversed that trend. On the contrary, as we noted in the first section of this report, the proportion of those viewing inflation and unemployment as among the major national problems declined. This is perhaps a residual effect of the economic security people felt in the latter half of the 1980s, indicating that many people were not yet feeling the effects of worsening economic conditions.

At the same time, there has been a significant increase in the perceived correlation between American foreign policy and the state of the U.S. economy, an increase in most instances back to the levels of the 1970s during the oil crisis. Americans increasingly view foreign policy as having a major impact on the U.S. economy generally, especially on gasoline prices, but also on the value of the dollar abroad, on unemployment and food prices at home (see Figure IV–1). The situation in the Persian Gulf has certainly accentuated this trend in relation to oil prices, but the trend also suggests a growing concern about America's competitive economic position and global effects on our domestic economy.

The results of respondents' attitudes about America's competitive position in international economics are telling: 66% of the public sample and 71% of the leadership sample agree with the view that America's inability to solve economic problems has caused the country to decline as a world power (see Figure IV–2). Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter Two, the public's number one preferred foreign policy objective is "protecting the jobs of American workers," with "protecting the interests of American business abroad" a close second.

### TARIFFS

The public continues to feel a need for tariffs in international trade: 54% think tariffs and trade restrictions are necessary, and only 25% favor eliminating them. In fact, when one removes from the calculation those who responded "don't know," 68% of those with opinions believe that tariffs are necessary. These figures have held steady in recent years and reflect only a marginal increase in support for tariffs.

In contrast, the leadership sample has consistently been highly supportive of free trade, although a slow decline in those favoring the elimination of tariffs has occurred over the course of our studies. Nearly two-thirds (64%) of the leaders, compared with three-quarters (75%) in 1978, now favor all countries eliminating their tariffs on imported goods. One-third of our sample (33%), compared with 23% in 1978, believe that tariffs are nec-

## FIGURE IV–1. IMPACT OF FOREIGN POLICY ON THE U.S. ECONOMY

*"How important an impact do you think U.S. foreign policy has on the following: a major impact, a minor impact, or no impact at all?"*

**% "major impact"**

| | 1990 | 1986 | 1982 | 1978 | 1974 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gas prices | 88 | 68 | 81 | 85 | 87 |
| at home | 69 | 49 | 61 | 77 | * |
| Our overall | 73 | 62 | 72 | 72 | 76 |
| economy at home | 68 | 67 | 78 | 83 | * |
| Value of $ | 65 | 62 | 72 | 82 | 78 |
| abroad | 65 | 67 | 60 | 76 | * |
| Unemployment | 60 | 56 | 66 | 51 | 60 |
| at home | 30 | 50 | 48 | 41 | * |
| Food prices | 59 | 46 | 60 | 64 | 76 |
| at home | 20 | 26 | 38 | 39 | * |

* No data for leaders in 1974.

= THE PUBLIC
= THE LEADERS

essary (see Figure IV–3). Breaking our leadership sample down showed that business executives increasingly endorse the policy of eliminating tariffs: 78%, up from 71% in 1986. Labor leaders seem the most protectionist, with 75% (76% in 1986) believing that tariffs are necessary.

### JAPAN

As indicated earlier, there is strong agreement that Japan poses a serious economic threat to the vital interests of the United States. The economic power of Japan is deemed a critical threat by 60% of the public and by 63% of the leaders. Similarly, findings on Japan's trading practices reveal that substantial majorities of both the leadership and the public perceive the Japanese as pursuing unfair trading practices toward the United States. A comparison between Japan and Europe on the "fair trade" question is displayed in Figure IV–4.

### EUROPE

The European Community fares distinctly better, especially among the leaders. Both samples in general respond positively to the economic unification of Western Europe in 1992: 79% of the leaders think it is "mostly a good thing" for the U.S., as do 48% of the public (64% when "don't know" answers are excluded). There is a some degree of negative sentiment, however, evidenced in the nearly two-fifths (40% of the public and 38% of the leaders) of the respondents who view the Europeans as unfair traders. While not a majority, 30% of our public sample (41% of the leaders) list economic competition from Europe as a possibly "critical threat" to the United States in the next 10 years.

It is important to note the rather large degree of uncertainty toward the European economic situation. A very high proportion (29%) of the public responded "don't know" when asked about the trading practices of the European Community (EC), as did 6% of the leadership sample, a comparatively high figure for leaders. In addition, 24% of the public did not know if European unification was good or bad for the U.S., and 58% were not familiar enough with EC Commission President Jacques Delors to rate him on our "feeling thermometer" mentioned in Chapter Three.

### REGIONAL TRADE

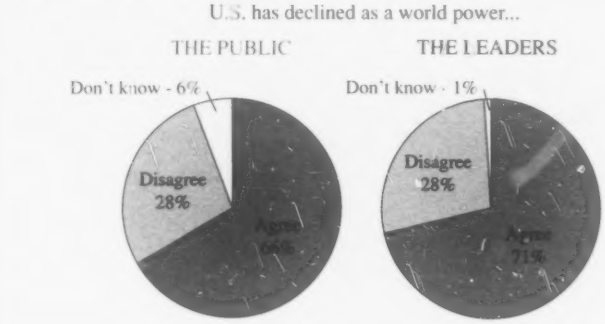
In keeping with the increased concern about the effects of global economic competition, especially from the "unfair" trade practices of Japan, there is some evidence of support for a move toward regional trading alliances. The public strongly agrees that "the United States should have a free trade agreement with Mexico, just as we do now with Canada." Seventy-one percent (83% of those with opinions) support such an agreement, as do 86% of the leadership sample. Even more surprising, the 73% of the public sample who believe that tariffs are necessary (81% of those with opinions) are nonetheless in favor of a free trade agreement with Mexico—a position shared almost uniformly by persons from all educational levels.

### ECONOMIC AID

There is no great support among Americans for the principle of foreign aid. Humanitarian feelings are evident in many

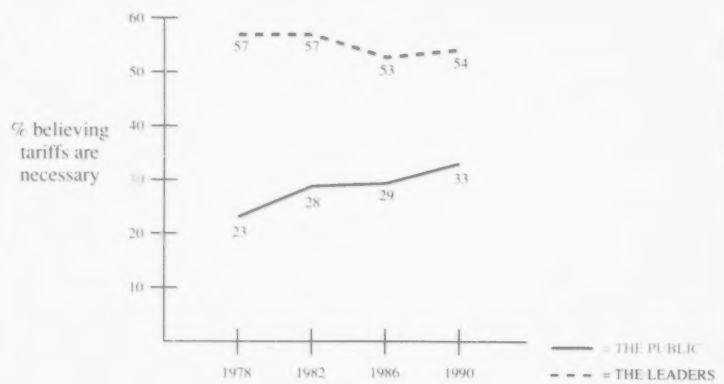
## FIGURE IV–2. U.S. ROLE IN WORLD

*"Some people say that America has been unable to solve its economic problems and that this has caused the country to decline as a world power. Do you agree or disagree with this view?"*



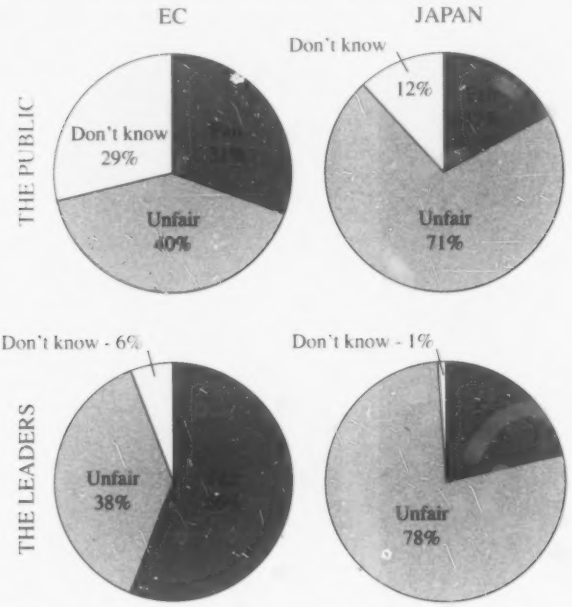

## FIGURE IV–3. TARIFFS AND TRADE RESTRICTIONS

*"It has been argued that if all countries would eliminate their tariffs and restrictions on imported goods, the costs of goods would go down for everyone. Others have said that such tariffs and restrictions are necessary to protect certain manufacturing jobs in certain industries from the competition of less expensive imports. Generally, would you say you sympathize more with those who want to eliminate tariffs or those who think such tariffs are necessary?"*



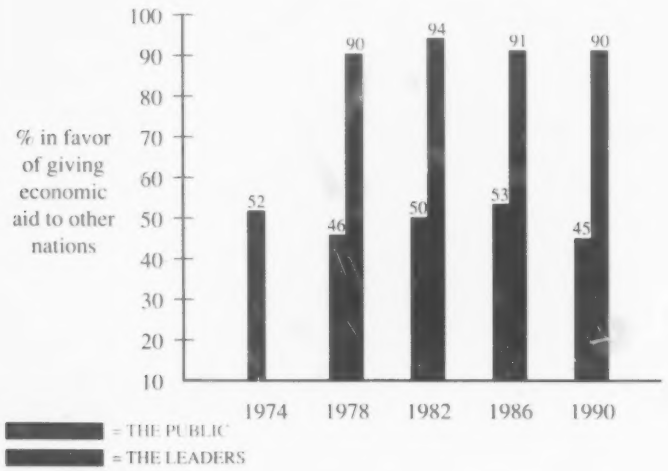
## FIGURE IV–4. TRADE RELATIONS WITH JAPAN AND THE EC

*"In general, do you think that Japan/the countries of the European Community (EC) practice fair trade or unfair trade with the United States?"*




## FIGURE IV–5. ECONOMIC AID TO OTHER NATIONS

*"On the whole, do you favor or oppose our giving economic aid to other nations for purposes of economic development and technical assistance?"*




surveys, which usually show generous public responses to all kinds of natural disasters. But Americans as a whole put much less emphasis on the more difficult and expensive goal of improving the standard of living in less developed nations (see Chapter Two). Over the past 16 years, the proportion of the general public considering that to be a "very important" goal of American foreign policy has remained within a narrow range: between 35% and 41%, reaching the latter level in our 1990 survey. Support for this goal among the leadership sample, however, has been dropping steadily over these years—from 64% in 1978 (when the leaders were first asked the question) to 42% in 1990, where it is identical to the public response.

The proportion of Americans who in the abstract favor our giving economic aid to other nations for purposes of economic development and technical assistance declined to 45% in 1990, after climbing steadily over the three preceding surveys (see Figure IV–5). In the context of a varied list of government programs, many more people (61%) want to cut back on spending for economic assistance than want to keep such spending the same (27%) or increase it (7%). At the same time, the proportion of people identifying "too much foreign aid being sent to other countries" as one of the biggest foreign policy problems facing the U.S. doubled from 9% in 1986 to 18% in 1990.

Support for economic aid has dropped noticeably among those groups in the public most traditionally associated with internationalism: the college-educated (down from 68% in 1986 to 61% in 1990), those who are most attentive to foreign news (down from 62% to 57%), people in business and professional occupations (down from 65% to 56%), and those who have travelled abroad (down from 59% to 50%). Despite the decline, however, these groups remain among the strongest advocates of economic aid among the general public.

To try to get more specific information about attitudes toward foreign aid as well as better insight into the components of those attitudes, this year we followed the general question about favoring or opposing economic aid to other countries with a question about support for economic aid to particular nations. There is sufficient variation in the responses to this question to indicate that the American people are discriminating in their willingness to help other nations and that many

people are quite willing to help other countries when they see some specific purpose or specific advantage in doing so. For example, 37% of the public feel that economic aid to "South American countries combatting the drug problem" should be increased, and only 12% feel it should be decreased. That is the highest level of support registered for any specific country or region. In a comparable but less specific question concerning the drug trade, two-thirds of the public sample—and 85% of the leadership sample—say they support foreign aid to help farmers in drug-producing countries grow different crops (see Figure IV–6).

In other areas (see Figure IV–7), twenty-eight percent of the public and 36% of leaders think that aid should be increased to Arab countries that are suffering from the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait; and 24% of the public and 74% of the leaders think that aid should be increased to newly independent countries in Eastern Europe.

Despite their high level of support for aid to Eastern Europe, a substantial majority of the leaders feel that Western European countries should play the primary role in providing economic assistance to Eastern Europe to help them establish market economies. Only 7% think that the U.S. alone should play that role.

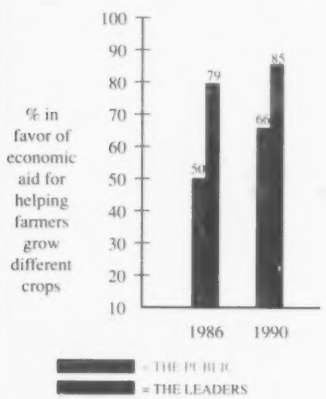
Two countries that were low on the priority list for economic aid at the time of our survey were Egypt and Israel: only 5% of the public (18% of the leaders) thought that aid to Egypt should be increased, while 40% (18% of the leaders) thought it should be decreased or stopped. Eight percent of the public (4% of the leaders) thought that aid to Israel should be increased, and 45% (54% of the leaders) thought it should be decreased or stopped.

### MILITARY AID

As in prior years, the public does not display much enthusiasm for U.S. military assistance to other countries—either giving aid or selling equipment. Over the years, only one-quarter to one-third of the public have favored giving military aid, while nearly two-thirds have regularly opposed. Today, 28% are in favor, down from 33% in 1986 (see Figure IV–8), with 64% opposed. When asked how they feel about either expanding, cutting back or maintaining the level of expenditures for

## FIGURE IV–6.
## ECONOMIC AID TO OTHER NATIONS

*"Now I am going to ask you some questions about how the U.S. should handle the problem of illegal drugs like heroin and cocaine coming into the U.S. Tell me whether you would favor or oppose providing economic assistance to help farmers in drug-producing countries to grow different crops.*




## FIGURE IV–7.
## ECONOMIC AID, MILITARY AID AND ARMS SALES — 1990

### ECONOMIC AID

*"Do you think economic aid to the following nations should be increased, decreased, kept about the same or stopped altogether?"*

| | THE PUBLIC | THE LEADERS | THE PUBLIC | THE LEADERS |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Increase | | Decrease/Stop | |
| South American countries combatting the drug problem | 37% | 55% | 21% | 5% |
| Arab countries suffering from the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait | 28 | 36 | 27 | 11 |
| Newly independent countries in Eastern Europe | 24 | 74 | 29 | 6 |
| Underdeveloped nations of Africa and Asia | 23 | 54 | 27 | 6 |
| Israel | 8 | 4 | 45 | 54 |
| Egypt | 5 | 18 | 40 | 18 |

### MILITARY AID

*"Do you think military aid to the following nations should be increased, decreased, kept about the same, or stopped altogether?"*

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Israel | 8% | 6% | 50% | 58% |
| The Philippines | 6 | 4 | 51 | 63 |
| Egypt | 5 | 10 | 47 | 36 |
| El Salvador | 5 | 4 | 55 | 74 |
| Turkey | 4 | 14 | 46 | 38 |
| South Korea | 2 | 2 | 55 | 64 |

### ARMS SALES

*"Do you think the sale of military equipment to the following nations should be increased, decreased, kept about the same, or stopped altogether?"*

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Saudi Arabia | 19% | 29% | 44% | 27% |
| Israel | 10 | 9 | 49 | 46 |
| Egypt | 8 | 13 | 46 | 30 |
| South Korea | 5 | 7 | 52 | 50 |
| Pakistan | 4 | 2 | 54 | 69 |

military aid compared with a variety of government programs, only 5% of the public want to expand such aid to other nations—about the same number recorded for that policy since the Council surveys began in 1974. Seventeen percent are in favor of maintaining the current level of military assistance, down 10 points from 1986, and 73% would decrease it, up 11 points from 1986.

The leadership group, substantially in favor of giving military aid in all our prior surveys, has abruptly and drastically changed its mind. From a high point of 73% in 1986, support among the leaders for giving aid has plunged to 39%. The leaders (75%) are now as eager as the general public to see federal spending on military aid programs cut back from their present levels.

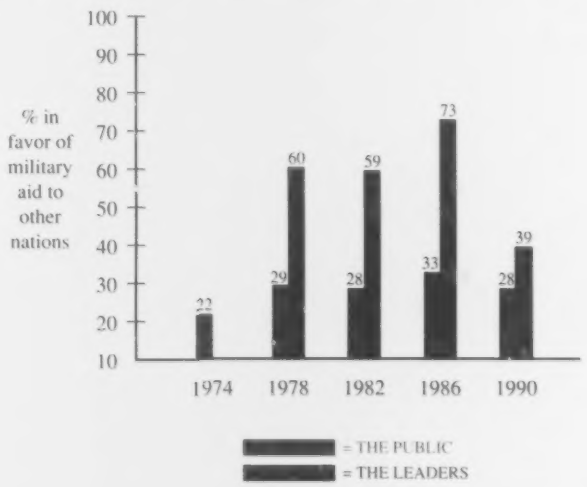
These attitudes are reflected in responses to a question on whether military aid to half-a-dozen specific countries—South Korea, Egypt, Israel, Turkey, El Salvador, and the Philippines—should be "increased, decreased, kept about the same, or stopped altogether" (see Figure IV–7). At the time of our survey, before the outbreak of war with Iraq, little support was displayed for increasing military aid to any of the countries, with all figures below 10% and in every case a plurality in favor of decreasing or stopping military aid over keeping it the same. The leaders were hardly more supportive, with majorities in favor of decreasing 'opping aid to all countries with the ›le exceptions of Egypt and Turkey, . arently a response to the current crisis in the Persian Gulf. Leaders voted in large pluralities to keep military aid to Egypt and Turkey the same, with as many as 10% and 14%, respectively, voting to increase it.

The sale of military equipment to other countries enjoys only marginally more support than military aid among both the public and leaders, as Figure IV–7 indicates. Here, too, the attitudes seem to be affected by the Persian Gulf situation, as reflected in responses concerning sales to specific countries—in this case, Egypt, South Korea, Israel, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia. Nineteen percent of the public and 29% of the leaders favored increasing the sale of military equipment to Saudi Arabia; comparable figures for Egypt were 8% and 13%, and 10% and 9% for Israel. On the other hand, 44% of the public and 27% of the leaders favored the decrease or cessation of military equipment sales to Saudi Arabia, 49% and 46% to Israel, and 46% and 30% to Egypt.

In summary, the results of our survey in 1990 are surprising: the double clouds of inflation and recession that have been hanging over the economy at least since the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait last August have not awakened all the concerns that have accompanied these issues in the past. Americans' focus on the standoff with Saddam Hussein and now with the course of war in the Persian Gulf have provided a temporary diversion from economic problems. Attitudes about these issues will undoubtedly change when the Gulf war draws to a close.

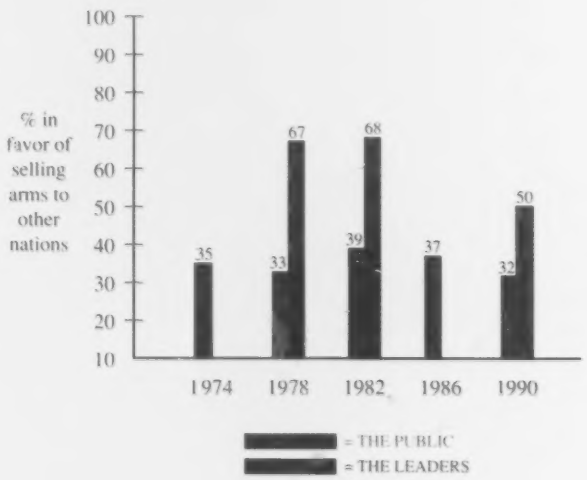
## FIGURE IV–8. MILITARY AID

*"On the whole, do you favor or oppose our giving military aid to other nations? By military aid I mean arms and equipment but not troops."*




## ARMS SALES

*"On the whole, do you favor or oppose our government selling military equipment to other nations?"*



# CHAPTER FIVE
# MILITARY RELATIONSHIPS

*Another important dimension of U.S. foreign policy is defense. Since the United States has been relatively secure in its geographical borders, defending America's security has mostly involved maintaining an active role overseas, whether through the presence of American troops or other means of support, such as providing financial assistance or military equipment. In this chapter we evaluate American opinion on the wide range of defense relationships between the U.S. and other countries.*

### U.S.–SOVIET MILITARY BALANCE

One of the most striking findings of the 1990 survey is the ratification of the view by the leaders that the U.S. has achieved and sustained a military edge over the Soviet Union. Among our leadership sample, a total of 71% feel the United States is militarily stronger, compared with 28% in 1986 and 20% in 1982 (see Figure V–1). Ninety-seven percent of the leadership sample believe that the U.S. is at least equal to the Soviet Union. The fact that a large majority of leaders is confident about the military strength of the U.S. should be kept in mind in analyzing of a wide range of other foreign policy concerns reviewed in this report.

Figures for the public, however, are much less dramatic. From 1982 to 1986, there was a mild increase in the percentage that saw the U.S. as more powerful, and the number in 1990 is somewhat higher. Since 1982, the number of respondents indicating that the Soviet Union is the stronger military power has declined from 29% to the 1990 figure of 15%. But the largest proportion of the public sample (48%) still believes the two powers "about equal" militarily, suggesting some remaining question about Soviet military power.

### COOPERATION WITH THE SOVIETS AND ARMS CONTROL

As mentioned in Chapter Three, the policies of U.S.–Soviet trade, scientific exchanges of a more general nature, and cooperation on military efforts in the Middle East all have strong support from both public and leadership groups. Yet, not all Americans are willing to abandon some precautionary policies. One-half of the leaders still oppose sharing technical information about defending against missile attacks, with 44% in favor. The public is notably more cautious: fully 64% of the public oppose sharing technical information on defending against missile attacks and only 27% are in favor. Roughly half of both the leaders and the public still favor limiting the sale of advanced U.S. computers to the Soviet Union. Arms control measures, although still enjoying high levels of support among both the public and leaders, have dropped substantially as a perceived problem on the foreign policy agenda (see Figure V–2).

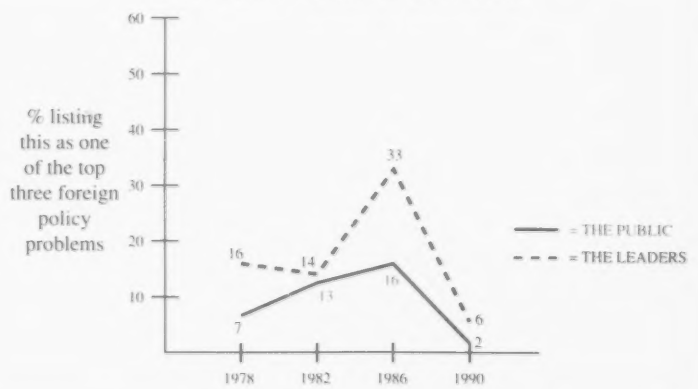
**FIGURE V–1. THE PERCEIVED MILITARY BALANCE**

*"At the present time, which nation do you feel is stronger in terms of military power, the United States or the Soviet Union — or do you think they are about equal militarily?"*

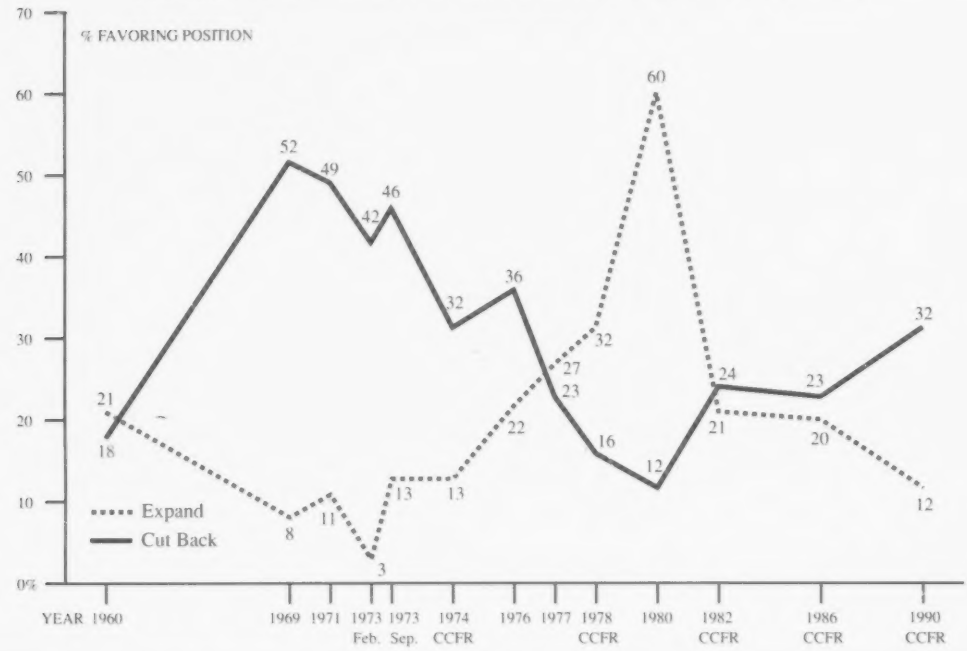
| | THE PUBLIC | | | | THE LEADERS | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1990 | 1986 | 1982 | 1979* | 1990 | 1986 | 1982 |
| U.S. stronger | 32% | 28% | 21% | 33% | 71% | 28% | 20% |
| About equal | 48 | 48 | 42 | 26 | 26 | 59 | 62 |
| USSR stronger | 15 | 17 | 29 | 32 | 3 | 11 | 15 |
| Don't know | 5 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 0 | 2 | 3 |

*Gallup survey #135-G

**FIGURE V–2. ARMS CONTROL**



## FIGURE V–3. SENTIMENT ON DEFENSE SPENDING – THE PUBLIC




### DEFENSE SPENDING

One of the most important variations in public and leadership attitudes has concerned levels of defense spending. The figures have usually swung up and down with the public's perception of the military balance and foreign threats. In times of perceived military strength and security, support for defense spending goes down. In times of perceived weakness or vulnerability, support goes up. Our 1990 survey reveals that Americans feel the U.S.–Soviet military balance has been restored sufficiently in favor of the U.S. and that the military threat of the Soviet Union has decreased substantially. Hence support for defense spending has been declining, although the effects of the Gulf War on attitudes toward defense spending remain unclear.

In all of our surveys, attitudes toward defense spending have been measured in two ways. First, respondents are asked whether defense spending, along with a number of other federal government programs, should be "expanded, cut back, or kept about the same." In this context, respondents are reminded of the many programs that compete within the federal budget, including such popular ones as aid to education and Social Security. When queried in this way, 43% of the general public now want to cut back on defense spending (up from 34% in 1986) and 14% want to expand it (down from 22% in 1986). A total of 39% of the public want to keep defense spending at current levels, the same percentage as in 1986.

The defense spending question is also asked separately, following questions about foreign policy and with no implied domestic trade-offs. As in earlier surveys, support among the public for curtailing defense spending is less pronounced in this instance: a total of 32% want to cut back while only 12% want to expand. Among leaders, however, 2% want to expand defense spending and 77% want to cut back; the respective figures for 1986 are 12% and 37%. Although the response on the two versions differs, the basic trend remains the same: Americans support cutbacks on defense.

Figure V–3 provides long-term trend indications concerning public attitudes on this issue. With the passage of time, the peak of support for defense spending, which was reached around 1980, stands out with increasing clarity. This dramatic rise in support for increased spending is even greater than the last notable rise documented by Gallup in the late 1950s and is the most significant such shift on this subject found by Gallup since the late 1940s.

Since the 1970s, there have been marked shifts in the levels of defense spending preferred by Americans. During the period 1974 to 1978, there was a 19-point shift in favor of increased defense spending, from 13% to 32%, and a related decline in those who favored cutting back on defense, from 32% to 16%. Other polls indicated that the two years following the 1978 Council survey witnessed an even stronger surge in support for accelerated defense spending. A majority of the public held this view in 1980–81, then shifted back to support the status quo in the years from 1982 to 1986, becoming more stable on this issue. The 1990 survey results on both the public and leadership levels indicate that the trend is shifting toward cutting back defense spending.

In some earlier surveys, for example in 1978, the more attentive public and those who felt the Soviet Union militarily superior to the United States were more supportive of defense spending. These correlations are now waning with the

wide acceptance that the Soviet Union is no longer a stronger military power than the United States.

There are still some notable correlations concerning attitudes on defense and perceptions of the Soviet Union and Japan as world powers. One question asks respondents which of these two countries might be the "main adversary" of the U.S in the next ten years. Of those selecting the Soviet Union, 18% want to expand defense spending (6 percentage points higher than the overall public figure) and only 24% want to cut back (8 percentage points lower than the overall public figure). For those people who view Japan as a potential adversary, in this case for economic rather than military reasons, there is substantially less support for defense spending than in the overall sample: 5% for expanding and 31% for cutting back.

In another question, respondents are asked whether or not the Cold War is over. Among those who "agree strongly" that the Cold War is now history, only 5% want to expand defense spending and 55% want to cut back. Among those who believe that the Cold War remains a problem, 18% want to expand defense spending and only 19% want to cut back.

## PARTISAN DIFFERENCES

Partisanship plays a significant role in opinions on defense. This reflects perhaps more than anything else President Reagan's long-term emphasis on the priority of defense spending, a sentiment echoed—but in much more muted form—by his successor in the White House. Certainly, public attitudes are influenced by the positions of American political parties on defense issues. A total of 19% of Republicans but only 10% of Democrats want to expand defense spending, while 22% of Republicans and 36% of Democrats want to cut back. Perhaps more significant for actual policy pressures upon the U.S. government, our polls indicate that for the first time in recent years, Republicans as well as Democrats are more in favor of cutting back than of expanding defense spending (see Figure V–4).

Over the years there has been a strong, long-term connection between partisanship and attitudes on defense spending, but not always on the same side of the issue. Party sentiment on defense spending measured by the Gallup Organization during the Eisenhower administration, another period when a Republican president held strong public views on military spending, was the reverse of the present: the Democrats advocated greater spending, the Republicans wanted less. Since that time, party positions have switched, but again, Republicans now increasingly support cuts in defense spending, creating virtual bipartisan support for such action. It remains to be seen if war in the Persian Gulf will again cause those positions to shift.

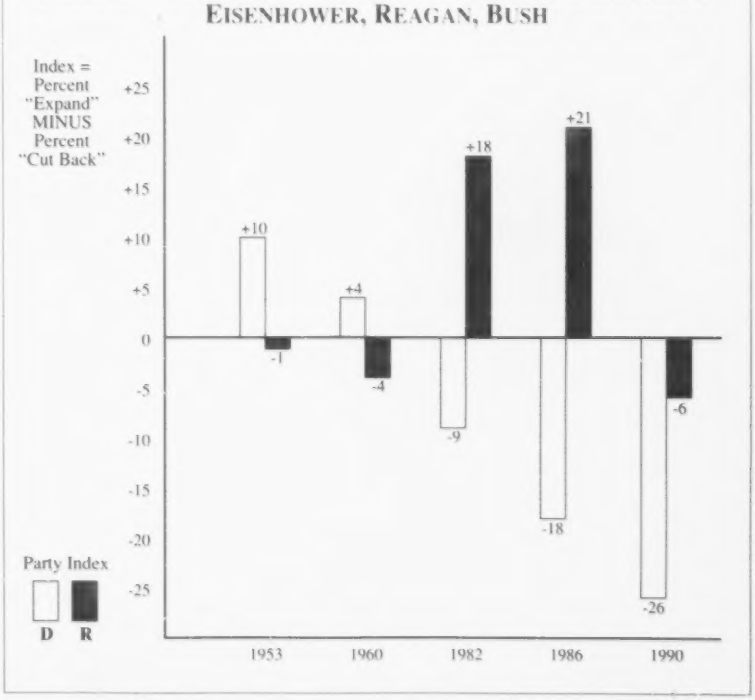
As party sentiment implies, a respondent's declared position on the liberal-conservative political spectrum also has a bearing on attitudes concerning defense spending: self-described conservatives are more in favor of defense spending than self-described liberals. Attitudes on defense spending by other groupings of our sample are worth note. The more formal education held by a respondent, the less the support for increasing defense spending and the greater the disposition to cut back. In the 1986 survey, union and religious representatives as well as educators in our leadership sample were especially anxious to cut back on defense spending. Now, at least 70% of every leadership group—with the notable exception of administration officials and members of the business community—favor cuts in defense spending.

## THE USE OF FORCE

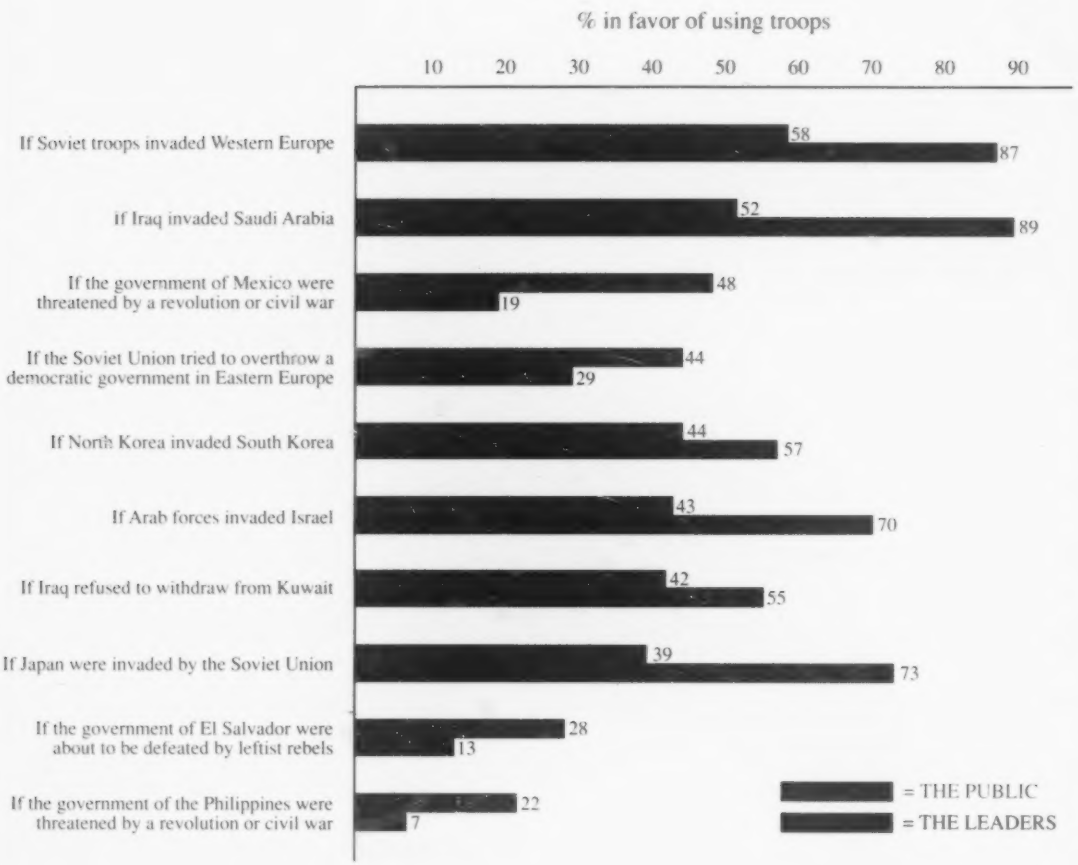
The 1990 survey did not document any overall change in the willingness of Americans to use force overseas (see Figure V–5). The public is still considerably more reluctant than the leadership to use troops in most cases and less clear on where they are most interested in using them. The public is evenly split on their commitment to the use of troops in most areas of the world. They are most sure of defending Western Europe (58%)—although that number is down 10 points from 1986—and Saudi Arabia (52%). They are least likely to want to send troops to El Salvador (28%) and the Philippines (22%) in a crisis situation.

The leadership sample is more clear-cut in defining priorities for the use of troops overseas and generally more willing to use them. Among the leaders, Saudi Arabia, Western Europe, Japan, Israel, South Korea and Kuwait, in that order, all enjoy majority support for the use of troops. The leaders are decisively against using troops in Eastern Europe, Mexico, El Sal-

**FIGURE V–4. SUPPORT FOR DEFENSE SPENDING BY PARTY: EISENHOWER, REAGAN, BUSH**



## FIGURE V–5. USE OF U.S. TROOPS OVERSEAS




vador and the Philippines.

Both the public and leaders are generally supportive of using troops in the Persian Gulf. In November 1990, 55% of the leaders favored and 40% opposed using troops if Iraq refused to withdraw from Kuwait. There was much greater support (89%) for using troops if Iraq invaded Saudi Arabia, with only 10% opposed. The public displayed a characteristically more hesitant view: 42% favored using troops while 45% opposed such a response if Iraq refused to withdraw from Kuwait. Again, there was greater support for defending Saudi Arabia against Iraq, with 52% of the public in favor and 37% opposed. More recent polls show strong initial support for President Bush's January 15 speech and the military effort to free Kuwait. It remains open how the duration, costs, and outcome of war with Iraq will affect the public's willingness to use troops abroad.

One puzzling response is the increased willingness of the public to use troops to defend South Korea against an invasion by North Korea, a response that may reflect recent publicity concerning both tentative negotiations between the North and South and the hard-line character of the Communist dictatorship in the North.

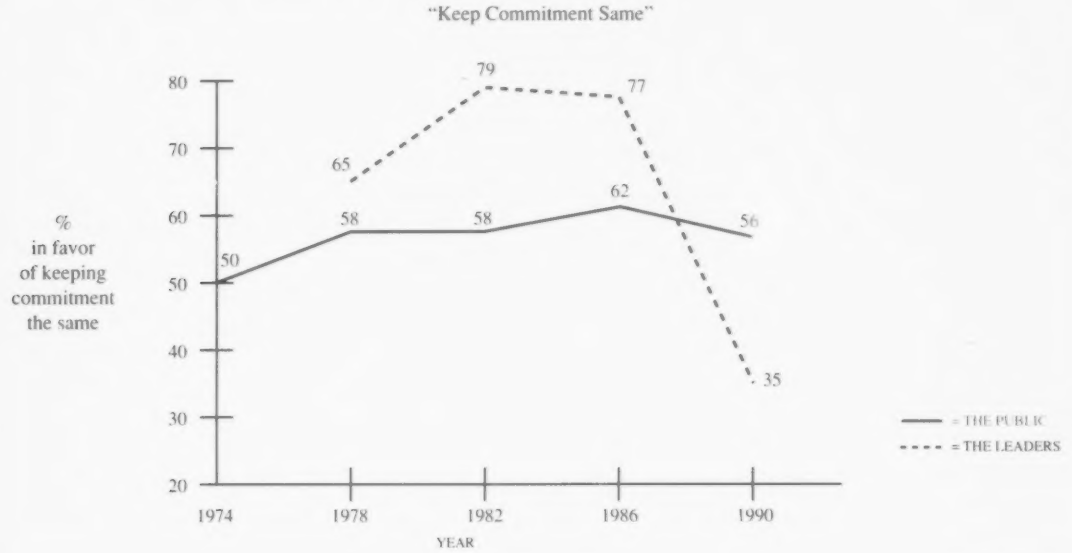
### NATO

The characteristic American public commitment to the NATO Alliance expressed in formal terms remains strong, but there is considerable flux when these attitudes are probed. When asked whether we should increase, decrease or maintain our commitment to NATO at the current level, a strong majority (56%) of the public prefers to "keep commitment the same," slightly less than the 62% registered in 1986 and about equal to the 58% in 1982 and 1978. Only in 1974 was the commitment lower, at 50%. At the same time, the leadership group has shifted noticeably away from maintaining the status quo toward decreasing our commitment. Figure V–6 charts this pattern.

Even though the public remains strongly committed to the NATO Alliance as an institution, there is clear sentiment

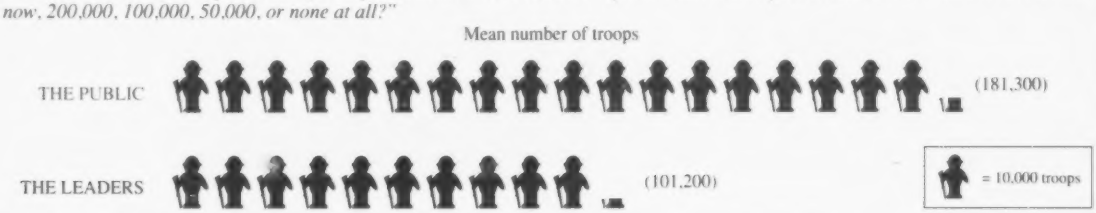
## FIGURE V–6. NATO ATTITUDES

*"Some people feel that NATO, the military organization of Western Europe and the United States, has outlived its usefulness, and that the United States should withdraw militarily from NATO. Others say that NATO still has a function in preserving peace in Europe. Do you feel we should increase our commitment to NATO, keep our commitment what it is now, decrease our commitment but still remain in NATO, or withdraw from NATO entirely?"*




## FIGURE V–7. PREFERRED TROOP NUMBERS IN WESTERN EUROPE

*"There are currently about 300,000 U.S. troops in Western Europe. Over the next few years, how many U.S. troops do you think we should have in Western Europe? Would you say we should have 400,000 troops in Western Europe, 300,000 which would be the same as now, 200,000, 100,000, 50,000, or none at all?"*




on the part of the public and leaders to reduce our troops in Europe. Figure V–7 illustrates responses to a question about NATO and troop levels in Europe. Substantial percentages of both public and leaders are in favor of cutting levels of U.S. forces in Western Europe significantly below the current level of approximately 300,000. A total of 55% of the public sample and a substantial 92% of the leaders, when presented with various options, select a troop level of 200,000 or fewer. The mean, or average, of the responses is 181,300 for the public and 101,200 for the leaders.

### JAPAN AND GERMANY ON THE WORLD SCENE

While Americans prefer a reduced defense role for the United States, whether measured in terms of spending at home or forces abroad, there is strong aversion to the proposition that Germany or Japan should play a larger military role in the world. Approximately two-thirds of both the public and leaders feel the U.S. should oppose a larger military role for either or both countries (see Figure V–8). At the same time, 90% of leaders believe that Germany and Japan should be pressed to pay part of the cost for U.S. forces in the Persian Gulf area.

### CIA ACTIVITIES

The 1990 survey again tested both public and elite attitudes toward covert action by the United States in other countries. Specifically, we asked whether people believe the CIA should or should not work

secretly inside other countries to weaken or overthrow unfriendly governments. Among the public, sentiment remains comparable to the past, with 45% feeling covert action is acceptable and 40% feeling the CIA should not engage in such activities. Among leaders, a total of 33% feel we should support covert action and 62% are opposed. In 1986, the comparable figures were 48% and 45%, respectively. The comparatively strong opposition by the leaders to covert action is congruent with their much stronger sense that the Cold War is over.

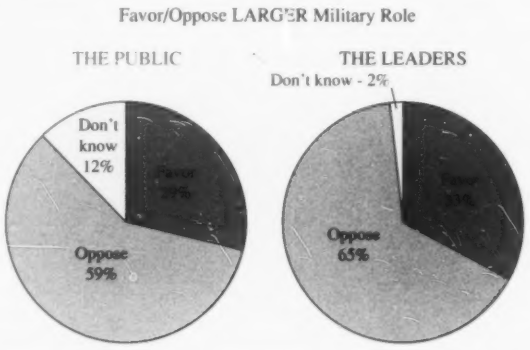
### DRUGS AND NATIONAL SECURITY

The U.S. government has increasingly defined the drug problem in national, and to some extent international, security terms. Given the particularly strong impact of drug abuse on the poor and minority sectors of the population, it is not surprising that black Americans are especially sensitive to the problem. Generally, black Americans are less willing than white Americans to use military force, but this relationship is reversed when the question involves drugs. Figure V–9 summarizes this point.

In summary, many American public and leader attitudes on military and security issues appear to reflect the theme of cautious internationalism that runs throughout this analysis. Americans wish to remain involved in the world and seem to be confident about our national strength in military terms, at the same time remaining fully cognizant of the non-military, especially economic dimensions of security and continuing to be anxious about the extent to which U.S. forces are or might be involved in military roles in other parts of the world.

### FIGURE V–8. PREFERRED WORLD MILITARY ROLE FOR JAPAN AND GERMANY

*"The principal losers of World War II, Japan and Germany, have now emerged as two of the strongest economic and financial powers in the world. Some people have urged Japan and Germany to assume a larger military role in the world; others believe this would be unwise. Which alternative corresponds most closely to your view?"*




### FIGURE V–9. FAVOR USE OF U.S. TROOPS — BY RACE

| | Black | White |
|---|---|---|
| Use our military forces to intervene in other countries even if their governments will not cooperate to control problem of illegal drugs | 47.3 | 29.3 |
| Use U.S. military if Iraq invaded Saudi Arabia | 34.3 | 53.9 |
| Use U.S military if Soviets invaded Western Europe | 38.1 | 60.0 |

# CHAPTER SIX

# GAPS IN FOREIGN POLICY PREFERENCES: THE LEADERS AND THE PUBLIC

*In a democracy, relationships among the policy preferences of the general public, leaders, and government officials are matters of especially great interest. As noted in previous reports, observers disagree about the importance of gaps between leaders and the public. Some advocates of democratic responsiveness might deplore such gaps, while some foreign policy experts may be less troubled by them. Simultaneous surveys of the general public and a sample of leaders (drawn from Congress, the Administration, business, the media, labor organizations, educational and religious institutions, special interest groups and private foreign policy organizations) permit us to explore such gaps, identifying areas of strong consensus, possible sources of tension and information gaps, or lags of opinion.*

## ANALYSIS

In this study, even more than in the past, a number of large differences emerged between the foreign policy preferences of the public and the leadership sample as a whole. On the other hand, differences between the administration and the public—which we highlighted in the 1983 and 1987 reports in relation to the Reagan Administration—appear to be smaller at present.

In prior sections we have pointed out many differences in responses between the public and the leaders. For the purposes of the analysis in this section we have recalculated percentages to exclude "don't know" responses, which the public gives more frequently than leaders, in order to make the figures comparable. We then subtracted the two to compute the gap. We found 27 cases in which there are differences of 30 percentage points or more. This is far more than the six such cases in 1986 or the nine in 1982.

The most notable instances of opinion difference between leaders and public are listed in Figure VI–1, grouped according to topic. Many of these differences concern U.S.–Soviet relations, military policy, economic and military aid to foreign countries, and policies bearing directly on the U.S. economy.

## U.S.–SOVIET RELATIONS

Figure VI–1 shows, as noted in earlier chapters, that the leaders are much more decisive than the general public in concluding that the Cold War is over and that the Soviet Union no longer poses a great threat to the United States. Some other notable differences not included in the table are: fewer leaders than public respondents (by 14 percentage points) labeled the military power of the Soviet

### FIGURE VI–1. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN LEADERS AND THE PUBLIC — 1990

| | THE PUBLIC | THE LEADERS | GAP (leaders MINUS public) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Involvement abroad** | | | |
| Best to take an active part in world affairs | 69% | 98% | +29% |
| **U.S.–Soviet relations** | | | |
| Goal of containing communism very important | 58% | 10% | -48% |
| Cold war not really over | 66% | 25% | -41% |
| Goal of matching Soviet military power very important | 58% | 20% | -38% |
| U.S. military stronger than Soviet | 34% | 71% | +37% |
| Favor economic aid to Soviets to modernize economy | 40% | 71% | +31% |
| **Military spending and alliances** | | | |
| Cut back defense spending | 33% | 77% | +44% |
| Favor decreasing commitment to NATO | 31% | 62% | +31% |
| **Use of military force** | | | |
| Favor using U.S. troops if: | | | |
| Iraq invaded Saudi Arabia | 58% | 90% | +32% |
| Japan were invaded by Soviet Union | 45% | 76% | +31% |
| Mexico were threatened by revolution | 54% | 20% | -34% |
| **Foreign economic aid** | | | |
| Favor economic aid to other countries in general | 50% | 91% | +41% |
| Favor cutting back economic aid to other countries | 64% | 21% | -43% |
| Favor increasing economic aid to Eastern Europe | 27% | 75% | +48% |
| **Other** | | | |
| Goal of protecting American business abroad very important | 65% | 27% | -38% |
| Favor 25-cent-per-gallon tax on gasoline to reduce oil dependency | 11% | 62% | +51% |

Note: Percentages are of those holding an opinion

Union a "critical" threat to U.S. interests over the next 10 years, and 13 percentage point fewer leaders named the Soviet Union the "main adversary" of the U.S. in the next 10 years. Other gaps in attitudes toward the Soviet Union are discussed in Chapter Three.

### MILITARY POLICY

As noted in Chapter Five, leaders are substantially more willing than the public to use U.S. troops abroad. The biggest such differences concern a threat of revolution in Mexico, an Iraqi invasion of Saudi Arabia and a Soviet invasion of Japan, as shown in Figure VI–1. There are also significant differences with respect to a Soviet invasion of Western Europe (25 points), an Arab invasion of Israel (21 points), a leftist victory in El Salvador (20 points), a Soviet overthrow of democratic governments in Eastern Europe (12 points), a North Korean invasion of South Korea (11 points), or an Iraqi refusal to leave Kuwait (10 points). Such differences have been typical over the years.

### ECONOMIC AID

Another major area of difference between leaders and the public concerns economic aid. As Figure VI–1 indicates, leaders are much more favorable to economic aid in general, and especially more favorable to increasing aid to Eastern Europe and underdeveloped countries of Africa and Asia. Leaders are also somewhat more in favor of increasing aid for South American countries combatting the drug problem, more opposed to decreasing aid to Egypt, and more favorable to increasing aid to Arab countries suffering from the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Only in the case of economic aid to Israel do substantially more leaders favor reduction. This tendency of leaders to favor economic aid more than the general public is familiar, found in all our surveys.

### MILITARY AID

Military aid and arms sales are a different matter. While the leaders are slightly more favorable to military aid in general and to increases in the cases of Turkey and Egypt, they prefer by substantially larger margins to decrease military aid in the cases of El Salvador, the Philippines, Israel, and South Korea. Likewise with arms sales, leaders are slightly more in favor of increased sales to Egypt, but prefer to decrease sales to Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Israel, and especially Pakistan.

### ECONOMIC POLICY

The final and perhaps most important area of major differences between leaders and the public concerns the U.S. economy. The public shows much more interest in domestic programs and the impact on them by foreign policy. By 47 percentage points more, the public wants to expand the social security program; they perceive a major impact of foreign policy on food prices by 43 points more, on unemployment by 34 points, and on gasoline prices by 21 points. Considerably larger percentages of the public than leaders view "protecting the interests of American business abroad" (by 38 points) and "protecting the jobs of American workers" (by 28 points) as "very important" foreign policy goals. Considerably fewer members of the public want to eliminate tariffs; far fewer favor a 25-cent gas tax to conserve oil; and fewer want to tax imported oil or to build more nuclear power plants, though considerably more favor limiting imported oil. Similar differences have appeared in each Council survey.

In summary, the general pattern of gaps between leaders and the public in 1990 is similar to past years. The number of large gaps is most likely greater because of two main factors: the dramatic improvement in U.S.–Soviet relations, which leaders followed in more detail, and increasing pressures on the U.S. economy, to which the general public is probably more sensitive.

## CONCLUDING NOTE

When taken in total, the 1991 public opinion survey and report of the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations reflect elements of major continuity and also major change. The American public and leaders remain strongly committed to international involvement and sensitive to the impact of the global forces on our economy and politics at home. Indeed, there is some evidence that interest in things international has grown among the public over the past several years. There is increasing military self-confidence and a related sense of security, especially on the part of the leaders. At the same time, both public and leaders are also conscious of American vulnerability, especially in the economic sphere, and are aware of the relative decline of the nation's trading and financial position in global context in recent years. Reconciling the duality of a simultaneous sense of security and insecurity is probably the greatest overall challenge facing American foreign policy leadership in the 1990s.

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